Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Master's Degree programme

in Language
Sciences

Final Thesis

Storytelling
at primary
school:
a case study

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Academic Year
2018 / 2019

To my nephew Riccardo and to all the children I met
and I will encounter on my path as an educator.

"In ognuno di questi ragazzi, anche il più disgraziato,
v'è un punto accessibile al bene.
Compito di un educatore è trovare quella corda sensibile e farla vibrare."

– San Giovanni Bosco –

Table of contents

Abstract

The chief aim of this dissertation is to describe the direct observation of a group of primary school pupils during a storytelling workshop conducted in Italian. A qualitative approach based on field notes was used to collect data and a coding strategy was employed in order to interpret it. The findings of the investigation unveiled a marked tendency on the part of the pupils to intervene spontaneously during the laboratory, that is to say without the teacher's encouragement. Moreover, it was noticed that children expressed a strong interest in the details concerning the story and the capacity to create connections between what they learnt during the workshop and activities which were external to it. Finally, children showed both positive and negative feelings in relation to the tasks proposed by the teacher that had been evaluated as signs of the reduction or increase of the Affective Filter phenomenon. In conclusion, it was reputed a useful didactic method, especially as far as language teaching and learning at primary school are concerned. The dissertation also includes some references to the historical origins of storytelling, its implications in the didactic field and some pre-existing research attesting its usefulness.

Introduction

Every teacher during his or her career arrives at the moment when finding didactic techniques considered new, innovative, unusual or alternative becomes necessary. They would like to maintain a good level of concentration in their students, arouse their interest in the discipline they are approaching, make them feel more motivated and at ease in the classroom. Another good intention can be added to the ones already mentioned, that is to say discovering new strategies that allow teachers to explain increasingly complex concepts in an engaging and playful manner but 'without exaggerating'. All these things considered, storytelling seems to be the ideal teaching method to satisfy all these requirements and lead to rather effective results.

Storytelling seems to be a very ancient practice which brings several benefits to both children and adults. These benefits do not only pertain to the anthropological sphere but they also belong to the educational area, especially if the teaching and learning of a first, second or foreign language are considered.

This is the reason why a qualitative research was conducted during a primary school storytelling workshop with the collaboration of a group of eighteen pupils. The aim of the project was to find an answer to the following question using a bottom-up approach: what impact do storytelling activities have on these children? That is to say what was pupils' reactions towards the use of storytelling as a learning method? What behaviours did children show during the observation? Therefore, the different comments, opinions and feedbacks on the part of the pupils towards the tasks proposed by the teacher were carefully observed and analysed.

In the very first chapter of this paper some general theoretical information concerning the historical roots of storytelling will be provided. The paragraphs of this section will analyse this practice from the point of view of its evolution throughout the history, from its expression by means of cave art and myths to travelling minstrels and paper books. The phenomenon will also be treated from the perspectives of Pedagogy and Anthropology by revealing why children, and consequently adults, have a strong need for telling and listening to stories during the course of their lives.

In the second chapter storytelling will be presented under a different facet, that is to say its didactic use. Storytelling, indeed, is considered an effective method to help pupils, especially the youngest ones, to learn content, vocabulary and cultural differences by feeling involved and entertained, concentrated, creative and in some cases relaxed and motivated. Some research and fieldwork will also be furnished in order to encounter literature with reality. Moreover, some suggestions about how storytelling should be performed in the classroom will be provided. At the end of the chapter some curiosities concerning this method will be reported, too. The novelties in question regard the existence of various storytelling schools around the world, dedicated both to children and adults, with the aim to help them develop or improve this interesting art from different perspectives.

The last three chapters of the dissertation represent the core of this thesis. Indeed, in chapter three the study will be illustrated by reporting some general information concerning the investigation as well as details regarding the objectives of the research, the methods and materials employed, the instruments used to collect and interpret data and the description of the participants.

Moving on to chapter four, it can be said that in this section the development and concrete realisation of the workshop will be illustrated by presenting the duration, the materials adopted, the kind of activity proposed and the aims of each task.

To conclude, in the last chapter the findings will be discussed in relation to the data collection process and the theoretical framework and literature furnished at the beginning of this work. Particular attention will be given to the concepts of spontaneous participation, attention for details and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

Chapter I

Theoretical framework

"After nourishment, shelter and companionship,
stories are the thing we need most in the world."
Philip Pullman[1]

This short quotation by famous British writer Philip Pullman, encloses the essence of the very first part of this thesis. All human beings, indeed, have some primary needs such as nourishing, feeling protected, having a refuge, being nursed in case of illness or disease, creating relationships with other individuals. However, there is another paramount necessity that men often leave behind or do not even consider as an actual need and which is strictly connected to interactions among humans: telling and listening to stories.

People usually think about storytelling as the action of opening a book and reading it out loud to a given audience. On the contrary, as it will be deepened in this chapter, the situation is completely different.

As Langellier and Peterson (2004:1) assert, everyone can perform storytelling any time during the day by relating personal situations to family or friends. It is experienced whenever a child tells his mother about what happened at school or the TV journalist reports what occurred during an inquiry.

Clearly, as stated by Haven (2000:1-2), these stories are not formally and semantically refined as those published in books by famous writers. However, they are extremely significant to both the teller and the listener since they are a form of intimate expression. Thus, storytelling is "an integral and consequential part of daily life" (Langellier, Peterson, 2004:1), that is to say one aspect of human beings' everyday routine. All these sides and many other interesting facets of this phenomenon will be explored in the following paragraphs.

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[1] This quotation has been taken from an online article by Ellie Gillespie entitled "Sustainable storytelling is a powerful tool that communicates vision", https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/sustainable-stories-powerful-tool-communicates-vision.

Therefore, in this chapter the theoretical aspects of storytelling will be illustrated starting from its definition, moving on to its historical roots and the role it may assume in different disciplines like Pedagogy and Anthropology.

1.1 What is storytelling?

The art of storytelling is quite challenging to define. Various authors and experts in the fields of education and language teaching and learning have attempted to formally describe this interesting phenomenon and furnished useful materials to introduce the concept of storytelling.

First of all, it should be noticed that 'storytelling' is a compound word, that is to say a word composed of two terms. Namely, the noun 'story' and the verb 'to tell'. Therefore, if one considers just the linguistic analysis of this word, this art could simply be identified as the act of telling a story.

Despite the meaning of this word being perceivable or almost obvious, the fact of identifying storytelling as a peculiarity of human beings appears less evident. Bruner (2002:97) and Andrews (2004:77) stated that, thanks to man's biological characteristics and his capacity to communicate through language, the action of telling stories is specific to the humankind. It is part of a human's DNA and it can be considered as fundamental as eating, sleeping or breathing (Byatt in Spinozzi, 2011:232).

Of course, the ability to speak encloses the capacity to think and share with others. Indeed, Geisler (1997:2) states that this technique does not merely consist in narrating a tale out loud. Storytelling is also interpretation, entertainment, gesture, imagination and the sharing of feelings. The same thoughts are quoted by Boje (2014: XVIII), who resumes storytelling in two main actions: "*listening*" and "*interpreting*"[2]. Thus, through their senses and capacities, human beings should be able to give a personal meaning to what they hear and see.

Greene (1996:33) appears to agree with these prospects, too. The author depicts storytelling as amazement and wondering but, more significantly, as originally an oral tradition which aims at leading both the storyteller and the listeners to the expression of their emotions, personal situations and beliefs through narration. Moreover, Greene explains how the event of relating

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[2] The Italic font was employed by the author of the book.

stories to create a sense of membership in a given community whose components usually share the same principles is fundamental.

All these considerations should help the reader to understand that storytelling is not a simple and passive listening activity. In fact, the International Storytelling Network has created a definition which can quite accurately summarise the thoughts expressed by the preceding authors. According to their explanation storytelling is *"the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination."*[3]

Thus, by means of the storyteller a tale is narrated, a sense and a moral are given to words and motions, dreams and fantasies are stimulated and relationships are established between the narrator and the audience.

1.2 Historical roots

In order to properly understand this concept, it appears relevant to go back to the historical origins of this widespread practice which actually dates back to ancient times, exactly to Prehistory (Bruner, 2002:108). Indeed, even though this assumption may seem quite odd, during this period men acquired the capacity to communicate with each other by means of various tools such as sounds, gestures, ceremonies and graphic representations. Graffito and cave art are the very first examples of this form of narrative. Palaeolithic men, indeed, used this first sort of art to satisfy, in a sense, their need for communicating, for telling stories, practices and values of their own world. This event is defined by Pleiffer as a "communication revolution" (Saunders, 1984:47) since cave art was not "art for art's sake" (Saunders, 1984:47)[4]. Quite the opposite, several experts in the fields of History and Science like Metallinos (2009:149) assert that these paintings aimed at conveying information about the emotions and the habits shared by a given community. Davies seems to agree with this information and maintains that:

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[3] This quotation has been taken from the International Storytelling Network website, https://storynet.org/what-is-storytelling/. It appears relevant to underline that the Italic font was employed by the authors of the article in question and not by the person who wrote this dissertation.
[4] These expressions and information were taken from the New Scientist and are contained in an article by Nick Saunders entitled "Information overload in the Stone Age" published the 26th January 1984.

> "it is hard to pin-point exactly when [storytelling] started, although I would guess that when man first began to communicate he used stories. Cave paintings of that age are not isolated doodles or pictures etched in stone for amusement; they are tales describing actual events, things that happened at that time" (Davies, 2007:3).

As human beings' brain developed and the capacity for producing language was acquired and perfected, men began to generate messages rich in meaning and provided with a greater complexity (Bruner, 2002:109). Messages started to be spread not only for transmitting customs and personal feelings but also religious ideas, historical events, teachings, rules and morals. As Jones states (2002:8), Greek myths and legends are typical examples of this evolution. Therefore, through narrating the deeds of heroes and gods or supernatural phenomena, people could express themselves, their cultural traits, their faiths, and identities.

According to Cullian and Goetz Person (2001:759), throughout history, the Middle Ages is without doubt the period when the art of storytelling acquired its biggest fame in terms of virtue, imagination, interaction and entertainment. The figure of the storyteller or travelling minstrel was embodied by a man who moved from one place to the other and gathered large crowds in order to recite rhymes, telling folktales, romances or heroic feats usually accompanying them with musical instruments.

This ancient ritual is attested by the literary texts produced in this period. *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer represent a clear proof of the preceding considerations since they introduced the story of many pilgrims undertaking a journey to the cathedral of Canterbury, who began to invent and tell stories to their fellows in order to take their minds off and describe their societies at the same time[5].

As Koff and Schildgen (2002:12) point out, another significant instance is represented by Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio and his *Decameron*. The collection narrates the escape of some young men and women from the city of Florence which had been infected by the plague. The group found refuge in the countryside and started to tell stories to each other every day at the same hour.

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[5] This piece of information has been taken from the official website of *The Canterbury Tales* and can be found in the section called "CHAUCHER AND HIS TALES",
https://www.canterburytales.org.uk/about/chaucer-and-tales/.

According to Cullian and Goetz Person (2001:759), with the increase of literacy and the invention of printing, the job of the travelling minstrel misplaced its popularity and gradually disappeared and storytelling continued to be performed only in the family environment. Indeed, stories began to be published on paper books and many copies could be sold rapidly all over the world. However, between the 19th and 20th century there was an attempt by authors like Charles Dickens to give new birth to this tradition, even though following different principles and aiming at achieving different goals. Indeed, as Smiley (2002[6]) asserts, the Victorian writer used to undertake various "Reading tours" in England and America not only to promote his books but also to establish concrete relationships with the public and create suggestive atmospheres.

Nowadays in well-globalised countries, the art of storytelling in its classical shape has almost vanished. This is probably due to the growth of the technological fields and the possibility to quickly access e-books and other innovative reading tools. According to Fontana, Sassoon and Ramon (2011:11), despite this situation, storytelling is being employing in several fields such as marketing and business to promote the sale of products but it is also used as a didactic technique in schools and reading laboratories to improve language education. The phenomenon will be analysed from an instructive perspective in the second chapter.

1.3 Anthropologic and pedagogic dimensions of storytelling

As has been maintained in the previous lines, storytelling is one of the most common necessities all individuals need to satisfy. Thus, the questions which spontaneously arise from these reflections are: why do human beings, both children and adults, need stories? What are the reasons which push people to spend most of their time reading, telling and listening to them? To begin with, the factors which make children love stories and the motives why they need to listen to them will be expounded upon.

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[6] The page regarding this piece of information is not expressed since it was not present in the Google Books document consulted to examine this phenomenon. However, it is possible to know more about Smiley's point of view by having access to the following link:
https://books.google.it/books?id=xWGpb1QMYnQC&pg=PT107&lpg=PT107&dq=Dickens%27+reading+tours+Smiley&source=bl&ots=hw_xTugnLC&sig=ACfU3U3Zf8mc-nezSh-osPX5-clA9Mq-lw&hl=it&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjS4oOT9s3kAhXwThUIHSGxAgoQ6AEwEHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=Dickens'%20reading%20tours%20Smiley&f=false.

1.3.1 Children's need for stories

Children require stories since everything is knew to them and every situation, place or object of the world has to be experienced in order to acquire information about it and understand how the external environment works and is structured. This phenomenon could be described as a sort of discovering process whereby young individuals begin to reflect upon who they are and who they want to become and, by so doing, they learn how to connect with their counterparts and to assume specific behaviours with them (Bettelheim, 2016:9-10)[7]. Therefore, as Bettelheim asserts (2016:11), these necessities can be satisfied through fairy tales and folktales.

The Austrian psychoanalyst continues by saying that these kinds of narratives contain characters and propose plots which have the power of entertaining children and arousing their attention and curiosity by simultaneously giving lessons about what is 'good' and what is 'evil' (Bettelheim, 2016:11, 15). In other words, a moral is taught and by means of symbols and improbable situations, teachings to apply to real life are furnished, and children are enabled to interpret the story and critically evaluate what they have heard or read (Tatar, 2015:3).

Indeed, even though protagonists and events belong to a fantastic and unreal world, psychologist Sally Goddard Blythe[8] affirms that the kind of teachings proposed in fairytales and folktales are usually attachable to concrete circumstances as well as the type of feelings experienced by the characters[9].

There is another fundamental reason why stories are so relevant for children's lives and development. As Bettelheim (2016:13-14) states, they help them to understand the truth about life which is certainly characterised by happiness and light heartedness but also by inconveniences and moments of disorientation. Narrations are in this sense essential to learn how to overcome these predicaments. Indeed, even though fairy tales are fictional, they

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[7] This edition of *Il mondo incantato. Uso, importanza e significati psicoanalitici delle fiabe*, is a translation by Andrea D'Anna. However, the original book, whose name is *The uses of enchantment. The meaning and importance of fairytales*, was first published in 1975-1976 in New York by editor Alfred A. Knopf.

[8] Goddard Blythe is the director of The Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology funded in 1975, https://www.inpp.org.uk/about-us/.

[9] These statements are taken from an online article by The Telegraph entitled "What we can all learn from reading fairy tales". The article was published by Katherine Wilde, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/family-time/benefits-of-reading-fairy-tales/.

release a variety of incitements the child can elaborate, interpret and use to overcome difficulties (VanGundy, 2005:184) and mitigate potential psychological problems which can surface while growing up (De Berg, 2003:96). Bettelheim (2016: 11, 14) maintains that this objective is achieved by presenting situations, characters, emotions and topics with a level of complexity that is perfectly suitable for children and personified by the imaginary context.

The last element which makes tales so fascinating for children is magic. Warner (2018:3-4) explains that C.S. Lewis identified two kinds of worlds a person would like to live in. The first one is the "primary world", that is to say a concrete real world that all individuals can touch with their hands. The second one, on the contrary, is the world of fantasies, desires and imagination. Griffiths seems to support Lewis' line of reasoning and illustrates magic as follows:

> "Magic is the power to change the world around you.
> Magic is the advantage of childhood over adulthood.
> Magic is everything that does not exist.
> Magic is the secret language of childhood." (Griffiths, 2010:12)

To put it in another way, narrations stimulate children's fantasy and creativity by letting them dive into a world where everything is possible, where adventures like fighting against dragons or events like talking to animals and fairies are commonplaces. Children are catapulted into kingdoms where everything is unusual, sometimes even absurd since situations unfold being deprived of logic. This is the reason why circumstances rapidly change and are these changes that bewitch children and make them feel so involved in the story. According to Mikkelsen (2005:179), this attraction is probably due to the fact that children begin to listen to these stories "when they need it most", that is to say while growing up. Sometimes the adventures children undertake in fairytales are risky but, in any case, they appreciate them and feel safe because thanks to courage and magic they know that the result will be the classical formula 'they lived happily ever after' (Mikkelsen, 2005:178-179).

1.3.2 Adults' need for stories

Once they become adults, men's need for stories gradually increases. They start to feel the necessity to tell their counterparts who they are, what their origins are, what gifts they can offer to the world, how they feel and what their own stories are. In this sense, storytelling

becomes the ideal strategy to find human beings' personal identities through a rediscovery of their own cultures and showing them to other individuals who might embrace different conceptions of life, religion, society, different habits and relations. Therefore, there are two main reasons why adults need to tell and listen to stories and they can be recapitulated in two incisive words: culture and identity.

Many experts in the field of education and human sciences conform to these ideas. For instance, according to Thornborrow and Coates (2005:7-8), stories, and narrations in general, are fundamental aspects of human life as they are used to vehicle a variety of meanings. Sometimes they are adopted to give teachings, other times they are told just to raise the audience's pleasure. In some cases stories are central to show cultural and social perspectives of a given community, whereas in other cases they are the bedrocks men build their identities upon.

Bruner (2002: 72-73, 77) states that narrations have a strong influence on both the teller and the listener in terms of identity building. Indeed, he asserts that stories are essential to communicate with others. They appear to be fundamental to make different communities aware of the presence of other types of societies who can share the same values or refuse them and embrace other conceptions. Thus, thanks to storytelling men do not just show their personal and cultural traits to others, but they firstly experiment who they actually are. It could be said that they rediscover themselves.

Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001:1) appear to support these thoughts and describe the act of telling stories as "an expressive embodiment of our experience, as a mode of communication, and as a form for understanding the world and ultimately ourselves."

As mentioned above, the concept of personal identity is strictly connected to the cultural features of a given person or community. Indeed, the environment, the people, and the customs an individual is surrounded by can strongly influence his/her attitudes, convictions and personality. Doughty (2006:36) seems to confirm these thoughts when describing stories belonging to a certain cultural setting and specifically folktales. Indeed, she maintains that "culture is an inherent aspect of folktales, for folktales reveal cultural norms and ideologies, as well as question those cultural norms and ideologies."

Thus, stories, especially the popular ones, usually present the typical cultural features of a social group and consequently of the single individual by analysing various aspects of that community. For example its history, geographical references, religion, food, festivities and so on.

Bettelheim (2016:19), for instance, gives a relevant example concerning fairytales and asserts that there are several narrations whose aim is not that of merely presenting a plot. Quite the opposite, these tales usually convey religious and intimate messages or practices. *A thousand and one nights*, for example, contains many references to the Islamic religion and its characteristics.

The same could be declared about Dickens' masterpiece *A Christmas Carol* where a huge number of elements regarding the Christian celebration of Christmas functions as the setting of the whole story. This is interesting because not only is the festivity mentioned and used as a scenario, but it is also described following the beliefs of the British tradition and faith. The author even inserted many references to the Holy Bible[10].

Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:77-78) explains that, in some cases, these stories (especially folktales) are also etiological in the sense that they present the origins of a specific social group, its history and peculiarities.

It appears relevant to notice that many references have been reported regarding fairytales and folktales even though this section was dedicated to adults. According to Peek and Yankah (2004:868), this is primarily due to the fact that these kinds of narratives accompany the individual during his entire growing process and are handed down from one generation to the other. Obviously, if modern tales and narrations which are more suitable to adults' demands are taken into account, dragons and princesses will not be the main characters of the story but it cannot be forgotten that every author reports in his/her books cultural elements belonging to a given country or ethnic group.

To sum up, through the ancient practice of storytelling one can discover new cultures and philosophies, approach new religions, habits or ways of thinking, find out new places and undertake new experiences. Moreover, it stimulates reasoning, critical thinking and gives to

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[10] This piece of information belongs to an online article by the CBN based on Stephen Skelton's thoughts. The writer is the author of *A Christmas Carol: Special Church Edition*, https://www1.cbn.com/churchandministry/reclaiming-%27a-christmas-carol%27.

the readers/listeners significant teachings or morals. In the following chapter storytelling will be analysed from a different point of view which is one of its most significant implications in this paper: the educational field.

Chapter II

Literature review

Storytelling is characterised by several features that can be extremely fruitful if applied to the educational area, especially with primary school pupils. Indeed, it can be used to teach many different disciplines such as, literature, history and civic education, art and science[11] but it is also usually employed in first, second or foreign language learning.

In this chapter the reasons why storytelling would be a potential winning didactic methodology will be expounded upon along with the benefits it implicates. The characteristics and structures of a typical storytelling activity will also be explained. Moreover, some research concerning storytelling as a learning tool will be illustrated. Finally, the reader will discover some curiosities about this didactic procedure primarily connected to storytelling schools around the world.

It appears relevant to underline that the concepts reported in this chapter will be fundamental for the investigation that will be presented in chapters 3, 4 and 5, especially as far as the data interpretation process is concerned.

2.1 The didactic dimension of storytelling

Many experts in the fields of Linguistics, Language teaching and learning, Psychology and Pedagogy have tried to define storytelling through its didactic implications. From these studies several advantages have emerged concerning this methodology. For practical reasons they have been summarised into five major groups: entertainment and involvement, attention and concentration, imagination and creativity, cultural exchange and language acquisition.

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[11] This piece of information has been taken from an online article entitled "Pedagogical use of the storytelling in a contemporary educational environment", http://theodoregrammatas.com/en/pedagogical-use-of-the-storytelling-in-a-contemporary-educational-environment/.

a) Entertainment and involvement

Henniger (2005:2) states that one of the main goals of storytelling from a didactic perspective is entertainment. Thanks to this active method, children should feel more involved in the classroom activities, enjoy them through the story they are told or read and interact with each other and with their teachers.

This strategy has been identified as efficient in terms of learning by some research conducted by psychologist Seligman. The findings of his investigation (2003) regarding Mathematics show that, even though teachers tend to feel "guilty" when letting students carry out playful tasks, this procedure leads to positive feedbacks on the part of the pupils and to successful results. Thus, as stated by Fox Eades (2006:13-14), "Happy children learn better […] and being told stories is something that makes children happy."

The same thoughts are expressed by Davies (2007:6) who confirms that storytelling is a real form of amusement for pupils but also a way to make them feel more captivated and inspired to learn, reason and hypothesize. Furthermore, she adds that when children feel stimulated, the learning process improves.

This enjoyable sensation is probably due to the modalities trough which storytelling is performed. Indeed, students participate in a sort of exhibition or live show when listening to stories by means of this process[12]. This occurs not just thanks to the dramatic attitude the teacher acquires when telling the story but also because students might become the real protagonists of the tale. Indeed as Henniger (2005:2) asserts, storytelling "is [usually[13]] based on the method of 'Total Physical Response' […]."

The technique was first elaborated by Asher in the 70s and practically consists in helping students learn concepts and especially vocabulary through creating associations between the actions of the characters of the story and students' body movements. For instance, if the protagonist does something like opening a book, the teacher can ask the students to perform the same operation. After the reading, pupils can also be invited to carry out some exercises

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[12] This piece of information has been taken from an online article entitled "Pedagogical use of the storytelling in a contemporary educational environment", http://theodoregrammatas.com/en/pedagogical-use-of-the-storytelling-in-a-contemporary-educational-environment/.

[13] The adverb of frequency put in brackets has been added by the essayer since storytelling activities are not always carried out by means of this specific method.

about the story they have been told in order to fix new knowledge. According to Nordland and Prutett-Said (2006: 28-29), this particular form of teaching has the power to instruct and make the student feel at ease at the same time. In other words, pupils do not seems to perceive worry.

b) Attention and concentration

Another reason why storytelling appears to help young students in their learning process is that it incites pupils' receptiveness. Indeed, according to Davies (2007:6). it betters their listening skills and their capability to pay more attention to the information they receive while listening to the narration. Thus, children can feel more absorbed and concentrated[14] and, as a consequence of their engagement in the story and their curiosity to know how it develops, they acquire the abilities of "comparing, discriminating, predicting, sequencing, classifying and transferring information" (Stanley, Dillingham, 2009:7).

c) Imagination and creativity

Another point in favour of using storytelling as a learning tool is represented by fantasy. Davies (2007:6) states that, by means of this technique, it is possible for the listeners (especially for the youngest ones) to make room for imagination, to enter fictional worlds and enjoy a real explosion of creativity. As Zipes (2004:4) asserts, storytelling "stimulates our creative drives to reach a more ideal state of being." Therefore, as Isbell and Raines (2013:260) claim, the action of telling stories is fundamental in the developing process of the child and plays an important role in helping students to create sequences of pictures in their minds when they are listening to the story.

d) Cultural exchange

Davies (2007:6-7) underlines that storytelling has a power that should not be underestimated. Indeed, as has already been reported in the first chapter, stories are often rich in cultural elements and represent a country or a given community of individuals who share certain values in terms of religion, beliefs, food, customs and traditions. The concept of culture

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[14] This piece of information has been taken from an online article entitled "Pedagogical use of the storytelling in a contemporary educational environment", http://theodoregrammatas.com/en/pedagogical-use-of-the-storytelling-in-a-contemporary-educational-environment/.

appears to be extremely relevant for children who are completely inexperienced. Sometimes they are not aware of the main features which characterise their cultural roots or they do not even realise the existence of other environments in this sense. Thus, storytelling seems to be a useful strategy to know more about their cultural inheritance and the differences and peculiarities of other cultural environments around the world.

Therefore, culture can be taught through telling stories. As Stanley and Dillingham (2009:8) claim, these kinds of activities are fundamental to transmit a sense of tolerance, respect, integration and appreciation for what is different. Gabriel (2000:88), instead, affirms that stories "sustain a set of values and form part of wide networks through which meaning travels."

e) Language acquisition

It should not be forgotten that storytelling is commonly used as an innovative approach to teaching first, foreign and second languages. Indeed, Write (1995:4) claims that listening to stories in a language which is different from the mother tongue seems to be a "natural way to learn" an instrument that allows students to capture vocabulary, structures and sounds of the new language almost unconsciously (Wright, 1995:4-5).

Baldock (2006:75) highlights that it is also relevant to remember that listening to stories and work on them give students the opportunity to improve not just their listening and concentration skills, but also their writing and speaking abilities. It could be stated that they function as a sort of role model to tell students' personal stories and thoughts.

Davies (2007:6) seems to agree with these ideas and asserts that storytelling can be used to teach various subjects, especially those which are more demanding for children, and to help students understand in which context a specific term or construction should be used.

All these things considered, there are two more interesting considerations about storytelling that should be taken into account. They regard again the benefits this method embodies but, since they are particularly dense topics and given that they will be necessary for the conclusions of the direct observation presented in chapter 3, they will be treated apart. The subjects in question have to do with the relations between storytelling, spontaneous participation and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

2.1.1 Active and spontaneous participation and how to identify them

It has been demonstrated by many experts in the field of education that storytelling tasks might facilitate active and spontaneous participation in the classroom activities. However, before describing this phenomenon, it appears fundamental to elucidate the concept of participation in the classroom.

George (2011) in an article entitled "What is Active Participation?" introduces her thoughts concerning the subject matter by describing a common situation of everyday school life: there is a classroom with many students inside, some of them raise their hands because they need to communicate something or want to answer the teacher's questions, while others keep silent and do not intervene. The teacher should make an effort in finding strategies to help students participate more actively during lessons since, as George states, "Active participation is the consistent and simultaneous engagement of the minds of all the learners with the content of the lesson. Such participation increases the rate and degree of learning" [15]. This is the widespread picture that lies in the majority of people's minds when students' participation is mentioned. Nonetheless, active participation can be identified in several other ways.

First of all, it seems important to remember that the concept of participation is not of a universal type. In fact, Abdullah, Bakar and Mahbob (2011) maintain that it takes different shapes in different cultures. Therefore, what can normally be considered as a typical participatory behaviour in the European educational system, can be reputed discourtesy or boredom in other countries. Moreover, in their research "The dynamics of students participation in classroom: observation on level and forms of participation", the authors mentioned above identified two kinds of participation: "verbal and nonverbal". Verbal participation occurs whenever a student asks questions or intervenes to give his/her personal opinion or start a conversation with the classmates and the teacher. Nonverbal participation is usually of a passive type and primarily entails taking notes and silently listening to others[16].

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[15] The information and the quotation reported have been taken from an online article by Leela J. George entitled "What is Active Participation?"(2011), http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol6/608-newvoices2.aspx.

[16] The information and the quotation reported have been taken from an online article by M. Y. Abdullah, N. R .A. Bakar and M. H. Mahbob entitled "The dynamics of students participation in classroom: observation on level and forms of participation" (2011), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812036877.

Gomez, Arai and Lowe (1995) add other elements which can allow the teacher to understand whether students participate actively or not in the tasks proposed. An example is represented by "maintaining eye contact with the teacher as a sign of paying attention" and "creating a dichotomous relationship between speaking and listening in which the listener assumes a passive, receptive posture". The researchers also identify the reasons which can prevent pupils from participating, especially as far as language classes are concerned. Some examples are the classroom atmosphere, the kind of activities proposed by the teacher, students' worries about making mistakes and losing face, lack of self-confidence, cultural differences and class attendance (if students do not attend classes, they will not probably know what to say during lessons)[17].

Some evidence of the information reported in the preceding paragraphs can be found in an investigation by Eleni Moschovaki and Sara Meadows (2005) who observed a group of twenty kindergarten pupils and studied their level of spontaneous participation during storytelling laboratories. The findings of the experiment show that, thanks to this method, children tented to voluntarily answer the teacher's questions, especially when these concerned the illustrations contained in the book chosen for the workshop. Moreover, they often made spontaneous predictions or comments about the plots or the vocabulary of the story proposed by the teacher[18].

2.1.2 Affective Filter Hypothesis

According to Krahen's theories, two are the conditions that have to be satisfied in order for an individual to acquire something, above all a second language: the input received should be as much comprehensible as possible and the Affective Filter should be lowered (Gass, Selikner, 2001:202). It appears important to highlight that the second theory which has been mentioned is the condition for the accomplishment of the first one. In other words, as Weinrich (2009:4) affirms, in order to totally understand, process and internalise the external message received,

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[17] The information and quotations reported in this paragraph come from an online document by Gomez, A. M., Arai, M. J. & Lowe, H. (1995). The title of the paper in question is " When does a student participate in class? Ethnicity and classroom participation" and was first presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association of San Antonio in Texas, USA, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED392073.pdf.

[18] The information and quotations reported in this paragraph come from an online document by Eleni Moschovaki, a school adviser in Greece, and Sara Meadows, a student of the University of Bristol. The title of the research is "Young Children's Spontaneous Participation during Classroom Book Reading: Differences According to Various Types of Books" (2005), https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/590b/4360e4f7451b3232f4fb32120abfa72f3775.pdf.

the piece of information that is produced should be perfectly clear and "comprehensible" to the addressee. This intelligibility can be achieved adopting different strategies[19] such as using words the listener/reader already knows by adding a few new items[20] to them (Loewen, 2015:41), pronouncing clearly, using various tools like technologies, music or stories (Grassi, Barker, 2010:64). However, among these methodologies, there is one which is worth examining in depth, namely the concept of Affective Filter (Weinrich, 2009:4).

The Affective Filter Hypothesis was first elaborated in the field of language acquisition by Krashen and refers to a series of negative psychophysical factors which can represent an obstacle while learning a second language[21]. Towell and Hawkins (1994:27) report that these unpleasant situations is described through the metaphor of a 'cognitive filter' that if activated can considerably reduce the reception and elaboration of the input. In other words, these negative factors, which are embodied by states of anxiety, lack of motivation or self-confidence, tend to prevent language acquisition. A typical example of the activation of the Affective Filter occurs when a student has to speak in another language in front of the teacher and his or her classmates. Colombo and Furbush (2009:38) remark that the prospect of making a mistake or missing the correct pronunciation of a word can lead to the imperceptibility of the input or to the non production of the output required.

Balboni and Mezzadri (2014:38-39) describe this phenomenon from a physiological perspective by affirming that the human brain can initiate some mechanisms that can lead to two opposite poles: on the one hand there is the hippocampus that is responsible for positive reactions and procedure like memorisation and pleasantness. On the other hand, instead, if the subject finds himself/herself in a state of fear, annoyance, boredom or embarrassment, the amygdale is aroused and the result is a sense of tension.

In order to lower the Affective Filter and facilitate the "intake" process (Trosborg, 1995:68), that is acquisition, Cummins proposes several methods like creating motivation by means of activities based on the use of assorted materials and instruments like videos, drawings, songs, group works or didactic approaches that entail cooperation, active participation and involvement (Cummins in Gallagher, 2008:48-49).

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[19] Given that Krashen's theory of the intelligibility of the input is not completely necessary for the purposes of this paper, it will not be treated in detail.
[20] This theory is known as "*i+1*" and was proposed by Stephen Krashen (Loewen, 2015:41).
[21] Bertinato (2017: 57-58) lets the reader foresee that fear for mistakes or failures while learning is something that entails all disciplines and all contexts at school. Therefore, the concepts of anxiety and Affective Filter are not limited to language learning or acquisition.

Syrja (2011:76) adds other strategies that can be useful allies against stress and disinterest and are strictly connected to the psychological aspects of education. These techniques include remembering the students' names and uttering them without any mistakes, knowing the main features of the cultural environment they belong to, proposing moments of sharing or debate and encouraging esteem, respect and trust among the members of the group.

Also storytelling can be considered as a useful instrument not to increase the level of anxiety or boredom in the student. Indeed, in the introduction of her book Rosow (1996) reports that even Krashen

> "reads Spiderman comics to his graduate students – not because they can't do it for themselves, but because being read to is one of the best ways to lower the affective filter (the emotional barrier to learning) and make way for important messages to enter the brain" (Rosow, 1996:XXII).

In telling her personal experience as a teacher at primary school, Kuyvenhoven (2009:15) describes the reactions of her students towards storytelling activities and what she explains seems to support the information reported by Rosow above. Her pupils appeared to appreciate learning through listening to stories since this method allowed Kuyvenhoven to create a relaxed atmosphere in the class, to grasp students' attention and to clarify subjects which were more demanding.

2.2 How should a storytelling activity be structured?

In the preceding paragraphs the reader's attention has been focused on storytelling inserted in the school environment, specifically at primary school. However, there are some relevant questions that have not been discussed yet such as how should a storytelling activity be organised? What are the main features of this method from a pragmatic point of view? What does it consist in?

As with all the activities a teacher can propose to his/her students, storytelling tasks need to be structured in detail. The teacher should fix the objectives to reach, find the right story, organise activities and materials taking into account the aims, the time available, the costs, the disciplines involved in the project and so forth. In this section, the suggestions of some experts in storytelling will be presented.

Wright asserts (1995:11-12) that the first operation to perform before the laboratory begins is the choice of the story. In order to catch the students' attention it is necessary to select a tale that is adequate to the audience and the subjects in question. For instance, if the target groups are pupils of primary school the contents employed in the story should be intuitively comprehensible and less challenging with respect to an audience of teenagers or adults.

Wright (1995:11-12) continues by saying that another important consideration is represented by the language used in the book chosen to carry out the storytelling workshop. Indeed, it is important to choose the story and structure of all the activities in relation to whether the language employed is a first, a second or a foreign language. It is also relevant to understand at what level of the language in question the students are.

Choosing whether to read or tell the story is another influential point of this didactic technique. Both these practices entail some advantages and some drawbacks. If the teacher decides to read the story, he or she will not need to learn the plot by heart, the text will be faithful to the original one and students will probably feel more stimulated to read and may want to buy or borrow the book to revise the story or read it autonomously. However as Wright (1995:10) states, the teacher should be extremely careful about his/her reading style and velocity since they might make the students lose their interest if not so impressive. On the contrary, if the teacher's choice regards telling the story without the aid of a paper book, he or she should pay specific attention to the details concerning events, characters and settings and learn them almost by heart. Nevertheless, there will be a higher degree of probability to make the audience feel more captivated in the story through a more intensified use of body language and prosody variation (Wright, 1995:10-11).

After having made all these initial decisions, it appears relevant for the teacher to create some exercises, activities or assignments that allow pupils to concretely work on the story and its features. Wajnryb (2003:24 to 36) suggests a considerable number of tasks regarding narrative genre, language, grammar, music, logic and many others to help the teacher create solid paths for his/her students.

Creating silence and moments of pause is another curious and useful suggestion given by Fox Eades (2006:21-22) to create the perfect listening atmosphere. According to the writer, every storytelling moment should start with the teacher bringing silence into the classroom. A kind of silence that represents more than a simple environmental condition but a real emotional

state. To put it in another way, students are led to adopt the correct behaviour before the listening activity begins. This is fundamental in order to make them feel more engaged in the story and to obtain their concentration.

One of the chief elements the teacher should remember about telling stories as a teaching instrument is that, even though some messages should be conveyed and new knowledge instilled in the learner, grammar and vocabulary are not the only aims of storytelling. If the teacher concentrates excessively on language structures and theoretical concepts, the students will lose their interest in the plot and the result will be counter-productive (Wright, 1995:5).

In order to avoid this inconvenience, the storyteller can adopt some tricks related to his/her reading or telling attitude. Playing on prosody and gestural expressiveness are valid examples. The teacher, indeed, can create theatricality by changing the tone of the voice, making use of pauses, transforming his/her way of uttering according to the character who speaks in the story, using gestures, moving around the classroom, modifying the facial expression[22].

2.3 Preceding studies concerning storytelling

After having analysed in detail the benefits of storytelling in the educational field and its canonical structure, the reader's attention will now be drawn towards some preceding studies and research concerning storytelling as a didactic method to teach first, second or foreign languages at different levels of education, dedicating more concentration to primary school and middle school. All the investigations reported show findings that seem to verify what has been treated in the previous chapters and paragraphs.

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[22] The information reported in this paragraph has been taken from on online article by the BBC British Council entitled "Storytelling – Benefits and tips", https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/storytelling-benefits-tips.

2.3.1 "Teachers' perspectives toward the use of storytelling to teach young learners in classroom"[23]

In 2016 Temyara, a student from Satya Wacana Christian University (Indonesia), conducted some research in the field of language teaching and learning based on storytelling as a method to teach English to young learners. The title of her thesis, which holds the core of the study, is "Teachers' perspectives toward the use of storytelling to teach young learners in classroom". Therefore, the aim of the investigation was to understand what were teachers' points of view as far as storytelling was concerned in teaching English as a foreign language. Moreover, the study wanted to attract teachers' interest in this technique and in the benefits it encloses.

After a short presentation of the advantages of storytelling from a theoretical perspective, which mainly correspond to those treated in the preceding paragraphs (for instance, the increase of motivation, the need for magic in the child, the development of language and creativity skills), the details of the study are presented.

A research question was introduced at the beginning of investigation, namely "What are the teachers' perspectives toward the use of storytelling to teach young learners in classroom?". The subjects implicated were 12 teachers coming from three different Kindergartens in the city of Salatiga (Indonesia) where storytelling was commonly used as an instructive strategy. Regarding the kind of approach used to carry out the study, it can be reported that some qualitative research was conducted through some interviews based on 12 different questions. The teachers' answers were recorded and successively transcribed and categorised in order to interpret the data collected.

The first category that was identified entails the advantages of storytelling. Indeed, what emerged from teachers' comments was that this method tends to catch pupils' attention, it is a useful tool to train memorisation processes, pupils can feel more self-confident in terms of linguistic knowledge and communication and it improves imaginative abilities. The last benefit included in this group is quite curious since it has to do with teachers' skills. Storytelling seems to have positive effects on teachers' creativity as they can use various materials and instruments to carry out lessons and combine them in many interesting modes.

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[23] All the information provided has been taken from an online PDF document. It should be noticed that the title of the paragraph is the same expressed by the author of the research treated in paragraph 2.3.1. This is the reason why it has been put in quotation marks, http://repository.uksw.edu/bitstream/123456789/9481/2/T1_112012040_Full%20text.pdf.

The second category that was pinpointed deals with the type of story teachers should choose for their pupils. Indeed, according to the results of this study they should have specific characteristics like being engaging to increase pupils' memorisation, implicating a moral teaching, satisfying children's needs and interests.

The last group includes teachers' difficulties in preparing storytelling activities. Indeed, most of them observed some issues in finding a varied range of activities to propose to their pupils. Thus, if on the one hand storytelling improves teachers' creative skills, on the other hand this method puts them to the test in terms of time available, creation of diversified activities and finding of new ideas.

2.3.2 "Storytelling and language development"[24]

In their research Wallin and Trebel-Read (2015) analyse storytelling as a tool to teach English and Swedish as second and first languages. The chief aim of the study was to discover whether storytelling solicited a positive or negative response on the part of kindergarten-pupils in terms of language learning. In order to do so, some teachers were interviewed about their opinions and experiences concerning this method.

The findings of the paper in question demonstrate that pupils learnt words and structure by means of storytelling in everyday lessons rapidly and effectively. Indeed, their linguistic skills considerably improved alongside their listening abilities. Furthermore, it created relations among children, teachers, surrounding environments and different cultural backgrounds and it encouraged pupils' to maintain attention.

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[24] All the information provided has been taken from an online PDF document. It should be noticed that the title of the paragraph is the same expressed by the authors of the research treated in paragraph 2.3.3. This is the reason why it has been put in quotation marks, https://muep.mau.se/bitstream/handle/2043/18896/EX%20FINAL.pdf?sequence=2.

2.3.3 "Perspectives of learners and teachers on implementing the storytelling strategy as a way to develop story writing skills among middle school students" [25]

There is another significant study that is worth mentioning before moving on to some curiosities about storytelling. The investigation in question focuses the reader's attention upon a group of middle school students and their teachers in Oman. It appears relevant to underline that considering the density of this study, only the most important information of the research will be mentioned.

To begin with, it should be said that the language involved in the research is Arabic and the approach used to conduct the investigation is of a qual-quan or mixed type since both qualitative and quantitative procedures were taken into account. Indeed, semi-structure interviews and questionnaires were employed to collect data. Moreover, two research questions were formulated so as to concentrate the researchers' attention on the main objectives of the study:

1) "What are the perceptions of learners about the storytelling strategy?"
2) "What are the perceptions of teachers about the storytelling strategy?"

The first questionnaire was distributed to a good number of students (120) to verify whether they had taken advantage or not of a storytelling workshop with the aim of perfecting students' writing abilities. The second questionnaire, instead, was administered to the five teachers involved in the workshop mentioned above and aimed at collecting teachers' impressions about this experience from a didactic point of view. Furthermore, in order to make the data collected and its interpretation more reliable teachers were also submitted some interviews to complete the triangulation method.

What emerged from this detailed study is that the majority of the participants in the workshop had the impression of having increased their writing skills and their knowledge about how to structure a good story. Students discovered the importance of planning the story and its details before writing it down. Moreover, they sustained to have improved their linguistic skills and their fluency in speaking the Arabic language. Pupils appear to have observed some

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[25] All the information provided has been taken from an online PDF document. It should be noticed that the title of the paragraph is the same expressed by the authors of the research treated in paragraph 2.3.4. This is the reason why it has been put in quotation marks, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1348315

enhancements also as far as the emotional field is concerned. Indeed, they felt more motivated and involved in the activities proposed. Finally, more than 96% of the students maintained that storytelling was a useful instrument to stimulate their creativity.

Regarding the teachers' answers to the questionnaires and the interviews proposed by the experimenters, other interesting findings are reported in the paper. Teachers, indeed, seem to have really appreciated storytelling as an educational strategy. They considered this method useful and efficient not only to improve writing skills but also to encourage the development of social abilities and cooperation among students.

2.4 Storytelling schools

In the following paragraphs some curiosities concerning the world of storytelling will be presented. There are many storytelling schools and associations around the world that promote learning adopting a creative approach based on telling and listening to stories. The websites and web pages of the institutions in question will also be reported in order to allow the reader to access more information and possible materials.

2.4.1 In the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom miscellaneous teams of experts are trying to give storytelling a new life. A group of specialists represents a concrete example of this challenge. The team is composed of Chris Smith, Adam Guillain, Kate Barron, Jules Pottle and Nanette Noonan who are cooperating in order to sponsor storytelling as a didactic methodology at infant and primary school. The main aim of their project is training the schools that want to adhere to this venture and make them know how to deal with storytelling, how to use it effectively to teach different subjects, how to promote creativity, imagination and dynamism.

The promoters of this series of activities define them as "effective, engaging and empowering" and present in their website videos, books and suggestions to carry on this innovative method[26].

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[26] The information reported in this paragraph has been taken from the following website: https://storytellingschools.com/.

One of the schools involved in the project mentioned above is St. Saviour's School in London. The school proposes a special teaching method whereby teachers can encourage their pupils to improve various literacy skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) by means of storytelling[27].

In addition to these options which are mainly addressed to students, teachers and children, there is the possibility to approach storytelling for adults, too. Myths, fantastic narrations, religious tales are few of the paths suggested by the Emerson College School of Storytelling[28]. The school was founded in 1994 and its webpage proposes many courses, workshops and short laboratories concerning storytelling in all its shades under the supervision of its director Ashley Ramsden. The chief objective of Mr. Ramsden and his team is to create an environment where people can improve the art of telling stories by simultaneously sharing their cultures and habits through interactive tasks and both individual or group works.

2.4.2 In Italy

In Italy several courses concerning storytelling are available, too. However, they are inserted into completely different fields with respect to the educational one. Indeed, Italian institutions promote storytelling in the world of marketing and business through projects that are focused on these two sides of Economics.

The Holden School Contemporary Humanities[29] is an academy which offers a large number of training courses and camps that can be attended both online or in person with the aim of teaching the techniques of narration for factories and companies. Students will learn how to promote themselves, their ideas and products, they will acquire the art of written, oral and representational language and how to use it effectively in order to sell their creations and catch the customers' attention and interest. The courses take place in Turin and have an

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[27] This piece of information can be found at this link: http://www.st-saviours.towerhamlets.sch.uk/teaching-and-learning/a-storytelling-school/. In this case the link was not expressed in the main text since it regards just an example of storytelling school and not a specialised entity.

[28] The information reported cab be found at this link: https://www.schoolofstorytelling.com/.

[29] Even though the name of the school is written in the English language, it appears relevant to underline that the school mentioned in this paragraph is located in Italy. Moreover all the courses are carried out in Italian by professors whose mother tongue is Italian.

overall duration of three years. They include disciplines like Orthography, Architecture of the narration, Grammar, Harmony, Publishing and many others[30].

However, Turin is not the only Italian city where this sort of activities occur. The Mohole School in Milan makes available several opportunities for students yearning to learn the intriguing art of storytelling. It is an academy with the objective of training the people involved in all the subjects that turn around storytelling, with particular attention to writing, through academic or production courses, master classes, seminars and workshops.

Students will have the possibility to approach this technique from the points of view of advertisement, mass media and business but in some cases also cinema, drama, art and photography [31].

The schools and associations mentioned above are just some of the opportunities one can take advantage of in order to know and deal with the art of storytelling. Many foundations, indeed, can be found around the world, especially in Europe. Some examples are represented by the Mezrab Storytelling School in Amsterdam[32] and the UCLA TFT / UCA Storytelling Institute in Cannes[33].

Given that several useful materials have been furnished so far, it appears necessary to summarise what has been elaborated before looking at other nuances of storytelling. In these chapters some basic information concerning storytelling has been provided so as for the reader to clearly understand its meaning and implications. This peculiar methodology has been defined by means of experts' opinions and analysed throughout its history and pedagogy. Successively, the didactic entailments of storytelling have been discussed by illustrating some prior investigations in the field of language teaching and learning.

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[30] The piece of information reported in this section has been taken from the following website: https://scuolaholden.it/.

[31] The piece of information reported in this section has been taken from the following website: http://scuola.mohole.it/scrittura-e-storytelling/#.

[32]This is the link to know more about the school in question: https://mezrabstorytellingschool.nl/.

[33] This is the webpage to consult in order to have more information about this course: http://cannes-storytelling.com/.

In chapter 3 the shape of this paper will slightly change since a concrete study about storytelling and its didactic implications will be reported. The research was conducted by a university student during her apprenticeship and was approved by the university of Venice.

Chapter III

Direct observation of a storytelling laboratory at primary school

Considering what has been discussed in the previous chapters about the pedagogical and didactic dimensions of storytelling, a research regarding this new technique has been conducted. In this chapter the objectives, methods, materials and procedures of the study will be attentively examined.

3.1 Study

Eighteen seven-year-old pupils were observed during the development of a storytelling workshop based on a book for children entitled *L'Incredibile storia di Lavinia* by Bianca Pitzorno. The main purpose of the research was to study the reactions of the group to this alternative didactic methodology.

3.1.1 Research focus and objectives

The research which is going to be analysed has been conducted in the field of language teaching and learning. The ultimate aim of the research was to investigate the impact of storytelling activities on young learners of Italian as a first language (L1). Thus, in order to carry out the investigation effectively a main research question was introduced at the beginning of the observation: what impact do storytelling activities have on these children?

It appears relevant to explain what is meant by 'impact' in this research: the pupils' reactions and comments to the tasks proposed by the teacher in a storytelling workshop were observed. For instance, it was noticed whether children uttered something positive or negative regarding a specific activity or exercise, whether they participated spontaneously or not being always solicited by their teacher, and so on.

A bottom-up approach was adopted to collect the data. Therefore, field notes were used to register general information as they came in.

It seems significant to highlight that the teacher's objectives for the workshop and the aims of the research did not coincide. In fact, the teacher's purpose was to promote cooperation

among her pupils. Furthermore, she tried to increase their knowledge of Italian in terms of grammar and vocabulary and finally proposed a huge range of activities which aimed at understanding what the most efficient method to teach different subjects was. For instance, did children prefer learning grammar through writing texts or completing exercises? Did they learn more about Art or Italian by drawing or by means of games and group works? Given that these elements do not correspond to the objectives of this study, they will not be processed in this paper. However, in chapter 4, some references to the various activities concerning the storytelling workshop will be reported along with some general information regarding the didactic aims of each task.

3.1.2 Participants

The subjects implicated in the research were 18 seven-year-old children (7 males and 11 females) attending primary school. The group can be defined as heterogeneous since it was composed of many pupils belonging to different cultures whose parents spoke Italian as their second language (L2). Therefore, the class included twelve Italian children and six children with both parents or just one of them coming from Morocco, South America, Tunisia, Mexico, Romania and Russia. All students spoke Italian as their L1. Moreover, only children whose parents spoke Moroccan, Mexican and Spanish were bilingual. However, they did not show any difficulties from a linguistic perspective during the observation or the realisation of the storytelling laboratory.

Another fundamental aspect is represented by pupils' cognitive skills. Indeed, it is significant to recall that, for privacy reasons, the observer was not allowed to know whether children with special educational needs were present in the class or not. This element is reported since it would have been a meaningful variable for data interpretation.

3.1.3 Method

An Ethnographic qualitative approach was adopted in order to collect and analyse thick data (Sloan, Quan-Haase, 2017:201). That is to say, data which is not numerical as in quantitative research. On the contrary, this kind of approach deals with words and language. Thus, the observation was based on capturing processes rather than measuring a product.

Indeed, field notes were used to collect information during lessons employing a bottom-up process. Rubin and Babbie (2010:24) explain that this approach consists in formulating a general research question with no specific expectations on the part of the observer. Therefore, data is collected as it comes in or, as stated by Urquhart (2013:44, table 3.1), "the concepts come from the data." Data was successively analysed adopting data reduction and coding strategies.

Even though a bottom-up approach was used to collect data, some parameters have been fixed to observe children more objectively. The observation entailed pupils' participation by raising their hands or just intervening actively during the laboratory, eye contact with the teacher, positive or negative comments or behaviours concerning the tasks proposed.

In addition to this, some data regarding the ethical perspective and the documentation needs to be reported. As claimed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison, when working with minors

> "[…] the researchers consult and seek permission from those adults responsible for the prospective subjects, and second, they approach the young people themselves. The adults in question will be, for example, parents, teachers, tutors, psychiatrists, youth leaders, or team coaches, depending on the research context" (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007:54).

Thus, in order to carry out the research and to observe privacy policies, it was necessary to ask for the authorisations of the principal of the school complex, of the teachers and the parents of the students involved in the investigation. These are the reasons why data was collected anonymously[34].

3.1.4 Materials

Many tools were used to conduct the laboratory. A distinction must be made between the teacher's materials and the data collection materials.

3.1.4.1 Teaching instruments

First of all, it was necessary to choose an appropriate story for seven-year-old children. This choice was made by the teacher so as to reach her objectives and to satisfy pupils' needs and

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[34] The copies of the documents concerning the authorisation of the school principle and the consent to the use of personal data can be found in Appendix B.

desires. In order to engage children, a modern and unusual fairy tale has been selected. As mentioned above, *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia,* a book by Bianca Pitzorno, was chosen.

The plot illustrates the story of Lavinia, an unlucky poor orphan child who lives in Milan. She is homeless and wears rags. One frozen wintry day while she is trying to sell some matches to passers-by, a curious fairy arrives and offers her a ring with a special power: it turns everything into poop. Lavinia is disappointed because she is alone and penniless and she considers this present a sort of mockery. However, she will discover that the gifts of the ring are extremely powerful and thanks to them she can obtain everything she needs or wants. Unfortunately, the power of the magical object will negatively influence Lavinia and she will end up with accidentally transform by herself into poop. At the end, thanks to the help of his friend Clodoveo, she will become human again and understand an important lesson: when one receives a gift, he or she has to use it with sagacity without taking advantage of it excessively[35].

The book in question has been chosen by the teacher for the presence of pictures, for the linearity of the plot and of the morpho-syntactic structures involved, but especially for the inclusion of dialogues and the integration of magical elements and characters.

The materials used to conduct the storytelling laboratory were photocopies previously selected by the teacher. The document in question is an online PDF[36]. It seems relevant to highlight that not all the pages of this document were chosen by the teacher since some of them were not considered suitable to the group of pupils in terms of contents or to satisfy the teacher's objectives. To give an example, some of the materials present in the PDF document proposed subjects such as Mathematics, History or Science while the disciplines the teacher wanted to promote with the workshop were Art, Italian, Geography and Civic Education. Another reason why some of the papers were not considered has to do with the topics they offered. Indeed, the PDF document contained themes which are usually treated at a higher level of education such as the different suffixes to use in order to create diminutives or augmentative names. Therefore, they were not suitable to pupils at the second year of primary school. These are the reasons why only pages 1 to 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 21, 22, 26, 29 of the document were used.

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[35] This footnote refers to the source linked to the moral of the story, whereas the summary of the plot was produced by the person who wrote this thesis, https://zebuk.it/2016/11/lincredibile-storia-di-lavinia-bianca-pitfzorno-emanuela-bussolati/.

[36] The document mentioned before can be found by having access to this link: http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf

Given that different disciplines were proposed during the laboratory, the materials involved were not only black and white photocopies but also construction papers, markers, pencils and other stationary materials furnished by the school.

Another piece of information which appears quite fundamental to report is that only chapters from 1 to 7 were read to the students in presence of the observer who was an apprentice from the university of Venice. Thus, given that the time available to carry out the internship amounted to three months, the remaining parts of the tale were narrated after the end of it. Therefore, it was not possible to observe pupils' reactions to the second part of the reading workshop.

All these things considered, it seems important to report that the teacher who carried out the workshop had learnt how to develop a storytelling laboratory during a refresher course. Moreover, she had already used storytelling as a teaching tool with the same group of pupils the year before. However, the modalities adopted to carry out the activities where completely different from those used to conduct the workshop about Lavinia. Indeed, the book was read to the children in a couple of lessons since its length allowed the teacher to do so. Furthermore, the teacher's objectives were different: the book in question was *Otto. Autobiografia di un orsacchiotto* by Tomi Ungerer and was read to the pupils in order to make them aware of the meaning of the Holocaust memorial day ('Giorno della memoria').

3.1.4.2 Data collection instruments

As far as the analysis part of the research is concerned, some tables and grids have been necessary instruments to tabulate the data, interpret it and illustrate the findings. Moreover, a notepad and a pen have also been used to write notes during the observation.

Notes were taken dividing papers into three main parts: the first one included the formal description of the activity accompanied by the teaching objectives and the time employed to conduct the task, the second section entailed the materials used for the exercise, whereas the last part had to do with the research focus, that is to say pupils' feedbacks to the activity promoted by the teacher. Notes were successively transcribed into a computer in order to analyse data clearly and methodically.

3.1.5 Observation procedures

The direct observation process lasted about three months but the laboratory did not take place every day. Indeed, the teacher proposed storytelling activities about twice a week for approximately two hours per week. The days and the parts of the day chosen to carry out the laboratory were not fixed but changed according to the teacher's and pupils' necessities. Therefore, in some cases the activities were conducted in the morning, in other cases during the afternoon. Overall, 150 hours were spent for the observation process. Among them, almost 16 were dedicated to storytelling[37].

In order to completely understand the previous considerations, some general information about the school time-table will be reported: during the observation it was noticed that lessons began at 8.00 a.m. and finished at 4.00 p.m. Therefore, the investigation took place in a full-time school (in Italian 'scuola a tempo pieno'). Pupils have lunch at school and enjoy two break times during the day: the first recreation time is in the morning and lasts about 20 minutes, whereas the second one occurs after lunch and lasts approximately an hour.

A person unknown to the pupils (the writer of this thesis) was in charge of observing their attitudes, behaviours and comments during the development of the school-day, and more carefully during the storytelling activities. The observer had to write down her impressions and personal considerations about the reactions of the children to the tasks proposed. Therefore, the experimenter did not take notes just during the storytelling laboratory but throughout all her permanence in the classroom. This decision was made in order to ascertain whether something interesting connected to the storytelling activities would occur even outside the laboratory context, as actually happened.

As far as the observation modality is concerned, it is worth spending a few words about the environment where lessons took place[38]. Indeed, it appeared quite hospitable[39] for children.

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[37] All the evaluations present in this paragraph have been obtained through some calculation and analysis which can be found in Appendix A.

[38] This paragraph seems to be extremely relevant in terms of quality of education and development of social skills. Indeed, according to an article by Evidence Space based on some research by the University on Stanford, the school environment strongly influences the learning process. This is due to the fact that students have to spend several hours at school sitting in their classroom, they need to feel stimulated, safe and comfortable. This situation does not include only those aspects which are connected to the relationships between the members of the school (teachers, students, school staff), but also the didactic techniques which are used and the physical place where lessons occur. The lights, the acoustic and the

The walls of the classroom were covered with posters and assignments of different disciplines created by the students. Some maps, calendars and a time-table indicating the roles children have to carry out during the week were also present. For instance, they could be asked to distribute photocopies, to supervise the library of the classroom, to keep silence while the teacher went out, and so forth.

Concerning the arrangement of furniture, it has been observed that the pupils' desks were disposed in lines slightly inclined towards the middle of the room. The teacher's desk instead was placed in a corner and was mainly used to collect books and stationary. The position of these elements was frequently changed according to the kind of activity proposed by the teacher. Finally, the blackboard was positioned in the middle of the front wall in order to allow all pupils to enjoy a good visibility.

All these things considered, it should be reported that the observer was always seated in front of the class group in order to have a complete view of the children's reactions and of the surrounding environment and to immediately take notes of potential interesting behaviours. Of course, the number of pupils (eighteen) was quite substantial to observe all of them simultaneously but it was not possible to focus the attention just on one side of the class since children were asked to change their place every week. As a consequence, the researcher tried to observe all the children simultaneously.

During lessons the teacher often asked her pupils to change the arrangement of the desks in order to fit the environment to the kind of activity proposed. For instance, when a team work was required children created groups with their desks. This factor was not advantageous for the experimenter who had to move throughout the groups in order to observe pupils more attentively and to collect their potential comments. In other cases, children were asked to shape a semicircle with their desks so as to play a game. This disposition was more favourable since it allowed a complete observation.

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disposition of the desks are just some of the elements which may impact on the learning process and students' proficiency ("WELL-BEING, Article: The impact of classroom environment on student learning", https://www.british-gypsum.com/evidence-space/learn/the-impact-of-classroom-environment-on-student-learning). The same concepts are reclaimed by authors like Niar, Fielding and Fisher who underline the importance of a well-projected environment, an environment that must be functional to the kind of activity proposed (Niar, Fielding and Fisher in Biondi, Tosi, Borri, 2016:56-57).

[39] This statement might appear quite subjective. Actually, it is based on the article mentioned in footnote 37. Indeed, it is claimed that "coloured environments can improve learning and wellbeing".

The kind of activities mainly observed were grammar tasks, thus the completion of some exercises, reading moments, drawing and colouring activities, games and reflections or deductions stimulated by the teacher regarding the story and its structure.

It appears relevant to notice that the observer in question was a university student carrying out her apprenticeship and that she was a stranger to the children. This is the reason why, the very first day of observation she was introduced to them by the teacher who justified her presence to the pupils. This integration process seemed to be necessary in order not to distract the children too much from their activities and to get used to the presence of an outsider.

3.1.6 Data analysis procedures

A data reduction procedure was employed to analyse and reduce qualitative language data. Finally, coding and data display strategies were used.

3.1.6.1 Data reduction and coding procedures

Altson and Bowles (2003:207[40]) explain that the data reduction method is commonly used in qualitative research in order to decrease language data such as paragraphs, small texts, sentences, or utterances and summarise them. This method can be expanded into four main steps: pre-coding, open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Pre-coding is the process that precedes authentic coding. Saldaña (2016:16) observes how by means of it, the observer can stress what most captures her or his attention through different colours, circles or underlined parts. For this analysis the researcher highlighted with different colours or lines those elements which she evaluated as relevant to find an answer to the initial research question. An example is reported below.

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[40] The book which has been consulted for the study is dated 2003. However, the first publication dates back to 1998.

Example 1

Attività	Materiale	Impressioni
17 alunni. Prove per la recita con canzone.		Nulla da segnalare.
Scriviamo la data e facciamo la cornice e poi iniziamo con Lavinia (pag. 9). Si tratta di un gioco. 40 minuti circa	Scheda 9 fotocopiata per tutti.	Mentre spieghiamo il gioco dell'anello tutti sono silenziosi perché la maestra ha detto loro che avrebbero giocato. Questo silenzio potrebbe indicare attenzione. Rispieghiamo un po' di volte. Sembra che i bambini abbiano qualche difficoltà a capire le regole. Quale può essere il problema? C'è qualche parola difficile come "chi sbaglia paga pegno". La maestra allora spiega che pegno significa penitenza. Il gioco inizia: un bambino dice "mi sto divertendo". La situazione migliora quando ci sono le penitenze. La maestra chiede di saltare un po' di volte su una gamba sola, di saltare come un ranocchio. Poi sono i bambini a inventare le penitenze. Tutti scoppiano a ridere. Solo un bambino sembra essere imbarazzato nel subire la penitenza per aver sbagliato. Tiene il broncio e ha il viso arrossato. Forse è più timido e si sente preso in giro.

Open coding, instead, is defined by Monette, Sulliva and DeJong (2011:434) as the process whereby the experimenter carefully inspects the notes taken during the observation and pinpoints the most recurrent events to create some codes or categories. In qualitative research a code is described as:

"[…] a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based on visual data" (Saldaña, 2016:4).

As stated by Yates (2004:207) these categories are "provisional" since they need to be further "elaborated". They will be re-worked through selective coding which will be explained in the following paragraphs. The provisional categories created during this procedures were five: *spontaneous participation*, *silent moments*, *attention for details*, *positive feelings* and *negative feelings*[41].

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[41] The table containing the category division and the information connected to it can be deepened in Appendix A.

The third passage is embodied by *axial coding.* According to Soeters, Shields and Rietjens (2014:134) it consists in inserting in the groups all the patterns (statements, words or expressions) that have something in common. All these elements are considered as temporary, too. Indeed, the amount of material collected through this procedure is usually substantial and needs to be reduced by means of another specific step (Yates, 2004:207), that is again selective coding.

In order to understand this procedure, the five codes mentioned above will be expounded and exemplified.

The category *spontaneous participation* includes all those elements noticed by the observer which entailed voluntary attendance on the part of the pupils. That is to say every comment, action or behaviour whereby children answered questions or intervened spontaneously without being consulted by the teacher. For instance, they raised their hands to answer voluntarily to the teacher's questions.

The code named *silent moments* has to do with the expressions concerning moments of silence on the part of the children. These circumstances are considered ambiguous since the observer cannot be aware of whether silence is a positive or a negative signal. In some cases, its nature was perceivable from the context whereas in others it was completely impossible to deduce its temperament.

The group *attention for details* deals with facts or peculiarities concerning the story that pupils could remember. It also includes children's ability to create connections between what they were learning about the story and other disciplines. An example is represented by this episode: while children were reading a fairy tale in their Italian book, one of them noticed that the author of that story was the same of *L'Incredibile storia di Lavinia*, and informed the rest of the class.

The fourth and the fifth categories, *positive feelings* and *negative feelings*, refers respectively to children's favourable or dissenting comments and behaviours in relation to the storytelling tasks promoted by the teacher. Therefore, they can be associated with the insertion or non insertion of the Affective Filter. For instance, when pupils were not interested in listening to the story, some of them began playing with pencils and rubbers. In other cases they showed positive attitudes by laughing or declaring to feel at ease.

A graphic example of the axial coding strategy is reported below.

Table 1[42]

What impact did storytelling activities have on these children?				
1) Spontaneous participation	2) Attention for details	3) Silent moments	4) Positive feelings	5) Negative feelings
Ciò si può intuire dagli sguardi vigili e dalla partecipazione, dal continuo fare domande su ciò che andremo a fare …	Qualcuno ricorda addirittura le battute di alcuni personaggi. Si sente un coro dire "svolgimento"… ho notato che stanno capendo lo svolgimento cronologico dei fatti anche legato ad una storia che non è quella letta sul libro …	… I bambini sono silenziosi e sembrano ascoltare ed essere interessati in quanto hanno gli occhi attenti sulla lettrice … La classe nel complesso è silenziosa e faccio un giro per i banchi per vedere se tutti stanno lavorando …	… un bambino in particolare sembra apprezzare molto. Infatti dice "Oh si sta bene!". Un bambino dice: "mi sto divertendo!" …	I bambini sbadigliano e chiedono aiuto alla maestra per la seconda domanda che vuole invece stimolare la fantasia. Un bambino sembra essere annoiato perché dice "voglio andare a casa". …

The last passage entails *selective coding* and, as it is inspired by the name of the process, it refers to the selection of the elements to insert in these categories (Strauss and Corbin in Yin, 2011:187). In other words it is a skimming procedure whereby raw data are further reduced. The words, utterances or behaviours which frequently appear in the notes (synonyms, expressions which are semantically or conceptually similar) are clustered together so as to obtain a restrained number of codes and to avoid losing the research focus. As a result of this operation, a reduction of the codes usually occur. An example regarding this investigation can be reported in order to make the explanation clearer to the reader: through open coding, the researcher identified five different categories, that is to say two more with respect to the final categories which will be soon presented. Two of these groups were called *positive* and *negative feelings.* Given that they both refer to the idea of Affective Filter, they were merged into one singular code called *affective filter.* The category *silent moments* also disappeared since it was unified to the one entitled *affective filter*, too. Indeed, as a consequence of a second reading of the field notes, it was realised that children's silent behaviours were

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[42] The completed form of tables 1 and 2 can be found in Appendix A.

probably linked to their involvement in the task proposed. Therefore, they could be associated with the concept of Affective Filter.

All these things considered, the final categories which have been identified are three. Namely, *spontaneous participation*, *attention for details* and *affective filter.*

Table 2

What impact did storytelling activities have on these children?		
1) Spontaneous participation	2) Attention for details	3) Affective filter
Ciò si può intuire dagli sguardi vigili e dalla partecipazione, dal continuo fare domande su ciò che andremo a fare …	Qualcuno ricorda addirittura le battute di alcuni personaggi. …	… un bambino in particolare sembra apprezzare molto. Infatti dice "Oh si sta bene!". Un bambino sembra essere annoiato perché dice "voglio andare a casa". La classe nel complesso è silenziosa e faccio un giro per i banchi per vedere se tutti stanno lavorando. …

This step is fundamental in order for the experimenter to be able to infer the results of the investigation and to interpret data on the basis of its analysis.

3.1.6.2 Data display

As can be noticed by observing tables 1 and 2, data has been incorporated in a chart to facilitate its analysis and interpretation. This process is known as *data display* and "involves reducing the information into appropriate and simplified "gestalts or easily understood configurations"" (Miles & Humberman in Tashakkori, Teddlie, B. Teddlie, 2003:373).

The objective of the coding method proposed is to build a theory on the basis of the categories created. In other words, the observer should be able, at the end of the analysis, to make correlations between the codes she identified (Urquhart, 2013:41-43).

In this chapter the general framework of the research has been reported including the objectives, the kind of participants, the methodology, the instruments and the variety of procedures adopted to carry out the investigation. In the following section the reader will be led to the discovery of the different kinds of laboratories proposed and how they had been organised.

Chapter IV

Storytelling laboratory structure

In order to completely understand the results obtained through the direct observation and the relations between the tasks proposed and the pupils' responses, it appears fundamental to illustrate how the activities presented during the laboratory were structured. In this chapter they will be systematically illustrated. For each activity the duration of the task, the materials and objectives will be specified. Furthermore, a brief description of the development of the event will be reported. Each task is labelled by a short title which resumes the activities carried out by the pupils during the lesson in question. It should also be noticed that, all the information reported is the result of an overview of the data collected during the storytelling workshop observation.

4.1 Task 1: apprentice's integration and beginning of the laboratory

Objective: the teacher's chief aim of these tasks was to allow pupils' to implement a global phase whereby they could make hypotheses concerning the story and develop logical skills.
The second goal was to make children aware of the typical structure of a book and to improve their language through the introduction of specific terms like 'frontespizio' (frontispiece), 'illustrazioni' (illustrations) or 'editore' (editor).

Duration: 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Materials: a big coloured photocopy of the cover of the book was necessary for the enactment of the very first lesson along with some coloured cardboards and stationary materials. Some black and white photocopies of pages 2 and 3 of the online PDF[43] were also needed for the continuation of the laboratory.

Activity: the subjects included in this assignment were Italian and Art. The activity proposed by the teacher was divided into three main moments. The first one can be identified as 'apprentice's integration'. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 3, the presence of a stranger would have influenced or diverted pupils' attention from the focus of the activity. This is the reason why the observer introduced herself to the children by giving some general information

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[43] See page 2 and 3http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.

regarding her personal data (name, age, hobbies, favourite colour) and the workshop. Then, she asked the children to do the same by presenting themselves. Finally, she justified her interest in taking notes of their behaviours.

The second moment was a preliminary one: the title of the book was revealed to the pupils, and a photocopy of its cover was shown to them and hung on the blackboard in order for it to be visible to all children simultaneously. The teacher asked her pupils to make suggestions about the story, the characters involved, the time and space where the action took place. Children were successively asked to create a small folder to collect the laboratory materials. They had to personalise it according to their tastes and styles using various colours, typefaces and drawings.

The third and last assignment entailed two photocopies giving some formal information about the different parts books are normally composed of. For instance, pupils discovered the difference between the author of a book and its editor, they learned what is meant by copyright or colophon, they unearthed what is a back cover. In order to ensure whether children had really understood these concepts, a comparison with *L'Incredibile storia di Lavinia* was made.

4.2 Task 2: revision and reading of chapter 1

Objective: the aim of the activity was to create a comfortable and attractive atmosphere in order to help the pupils to acquire the right mood to listen to the story. Thanks to this activity it was possible to provide the children with a sort of 'ritual' to perform every time they were invited to listen to the story.

Duration: 1 hour.

Materials: the paper version of the book was fundamental for the story to be read out loud and create the right atmosphere in the class.

Activity: during the first 30 minutes pupils were asked to revise photocopies 2 and 3 in pairs and with the teacher. Later, children were invited to assume the so called 'posizione di ascolto' (listening attitude) by tidying up their desks from their school stuff, switching the lights off and sitting composedly with their arms crossed and a good posture. At that point, the teacher

began to read the first chapter of the story out loud using some strategies to obtain pupils' attention: she read emphatically, by changing her voice according to the character who was uttering the discourse, using different levels of intonations and various facial expressions and gestures.

4.3 Task 3: revising, making hypothesis and colouring

Objective: by proposing this activity, the teacher wanted again to promote the development of various abilities. First and foremost, the increase of pupils' imagination through exercises which should stimulate thinking and reasoning.

Duration: 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Materials: in order to carry out this activity, the photocopies of pages 4 and 6 were used[44].

Activity: the disciplines involved in this class were Italian and Art. During the first phase of the lesson students were asked by their teacher to review what had been read during the previous laboratory by answering the questions of photocopy number 4. The task was conducted individually and concerned a question about the identity of Lavinia, that is to say the main character of the story, and a query regarding the potential plot of the story. Eventually, pupils' answers were plenary shared.

In the second stage of the lesson, children were invited to colour sheet number 6 as they preferred. The paper represented the protagonist of the book sitting on some stairs in Milan.

4.4 Task 4: children's rights

Objective: the brainstorming activity was conducted in order to activate pupils' previous knowledge and verify whether they already knew something about the topic proposed (children's rights) or not. The second activity, instead, was promoted in order to sensitise children about what is often taken for granted in their lives.

Duration: 1 hour and 40 minutes.

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[44] See page 4 and 6 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.

Materials: some photocopies of page 9 of the online PDF [45] were used by pupils to conduct this task.

Activity: first, pupils were required to finish the drawing of sheet 6 since they did not finished it during the previous laboratory.

Secondly, the teacher suggested a brainstorming activity concerning Civic Education and precisely, children's rights. Thus, she wrote on the blackboard a meaningful sentence so as to encourage cause for reflection. The utterance in question was: "non avere diritti significa non avere …", that is to say "having no rights means …". To give their contribution, each child had to write on the blackboard his or her thoughts concerning the subject matter. For instance, having no rights means being penniless or homeless, being an orphan or illiterate and Lavinia, finds herself in these needy situations.

During the last part of the class, photocopy number 6 was distributed and pupils filled it in together with the teacher. The paper presented the drawings of many children's rights and invited pupils to write a short caption under the picture with the name of the right in question. They were also asked to think about other possible rights and represented them graphically.

4.5 Task 5: reading of chapter 2 and drawing

Objective: the main aim of this activity was enabling pupils to create connections between different codes (such as reading a description and representing it graphically). Therefore, they were taught how to manage materials with a specific code, and to turn them into the same materials expressed by means of another code. Moreover, it should be noticed that the type of text approached by the children was a descriptive one. This factor is quite relevant since pupils were learning how to write a description during their Italian classes.

Duration: 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Materials: some photocopies of pages 11 and 12 of the online PDF[46] were used for this lesson (two photocopies for each pupil).

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[45] See page 9 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.
[46] See page 11 and 12 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.

Activity: children were first invited to assume the right listening attitude and pay attention to the second chapter of the story[47]. Then, they were asked to complete paper 11 by carrying out a transcoding exercise whereby pupils had to read the physical description of the fairy introduced in the story and represent her through a drawing.

As children finished this task, they were exhorted to read photocopy number 12 containing a particular nursery rhyme[48].

4.6 Task 6: grammar and reading of chapters 3 and 4

Objective: the chief goal of this task was to help pupils to reinforce their knowledge of Italian, especially how to spell words properly. Another important aspect was making them realise that sometimes adding or removing a double letter from a term can completely change its meaning in the context.

Duration: 1 hour and 10 minutes.

Materials: the photocopies of page 12 were used to conduct this exercise.

Activity: in order to complete this task pupils had to read the photocopy carefully since it contained a curious nursery rhyme. Indeed, it was rich in spelling mistakes regarding words with missed double letters. Pupils had to re-write the text of the poem correctly in their notebooks. The activity had to be conducted in pairs. When all the children had completed the exercise they were encouraged to write two lines on the blackboard each so as to collectively correct their job. Finally, pupils assumed the typical listening attitude and the teacher read emphatically chapters number 3 and 4.

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[47] The reading modality which were adopted for this activity are the same expressed in the section 'activity' in paragraph 4.2 Task 2: revision and reading of chapter 1.

[48] Given that a little number of students finished the transcoding activity on time to carry out the following task, this activity will be carefully explained in paragraph 4.6, that is to say when it was actually performed.

4.7 Task 7: games, language and reading of chapter 5

Objective: the aims of these activities were those of promoting children's creativity by means of artistic tasks, improving their knowledge of the Italian language through exercises concerning jobs and nouns and understanding the importance of rules and loyalty while playing a game.

Duration: 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Materials: a ring, a teddy bear and the photocopies of papers 14, 15 and 22 of the PDF document[49] were necessary to conduct these activities.

Activity: first of all, pupils were asked to change the disposition of their desks and move them near the walls. Secondly, they had to join in a row and play a game with the 'magical' object the fairy gives to Lavinia in *L'Incredibile storia di Lavinia:* a ring. Before the beginning of the game, the teacher reads out loud the rules to observe contained in the second part of paper 14: all the children in the queue had to join their hands assuming a sort of 'praying attitude' while the first of the queue had to pass near his/her friends and let the ring fall inside the hands of one of his/her companions. The difficulty of this game was to achieve the goal without being identified as the new owner of the ring. If someone predicted correctly where the ring had been left, he or she become the new 'giver', whereas if someone made a mistake or did not guess right, he or she had to bank on.

After the game, pupils changed the arrangement of their desks again and created a semicircle for the revision activity. Indeed, they had to pass through a teddy bear and say what they remember about Lavinia's adventures. The teddy bear was used as a strategy to preserve an atmosphere of silence in the classroom. Indeed, only the child who held the stuffed animal in his/her hands could speak.

Then, children were encouraged to complete sheet 15 individually. The task consisted in drawing and colouring the shoes in Mr. Marsupiali's[50] shop and situating them on the shelves represented in the photocopy.

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[49] See page 14, 15 and 22 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.
[50] Mr. Marsupiali is one of the characters Lavinia meets during her journey. He is the owner of a shoe shop Lavinia is able to obtain a new pair of boots from by using the powers of her ring.

Finally, given that Mr. Marsupiali is identified by the narrator as a 'negoziante' (trader), pupils had to read photocopy number 22 carefully and to carry out two exercises concerning common nouns and jobs. At the end of these tasks, the teacher read chapter number 5 to her pupils carefully.

4.8 Task 8: revising and colouring

Objective: the chief objective of this activity was that of making pupils understand the peculiarities of different colours and the feelings and sensations they infuse and are used for.

Duration: 35 minutes.

Materials: sheet 21 was employed by children to conduct the activity[51].

Activity: to begin with, the teacher asked some pupils to repeat what had been read about Lavinia in the previous classes. Finally, she explained that *L'incredibile storia di Lavinia* was set in winter. Therefore, she asked children to colour the two photographs present in paper number 21 with cold and warm colours. Before colouring, pupils could open their Art books and revise the differences between these two types of colours which were associated with some emoticons representing various emotions.

4.9 Task 9: underlining and reading of chapter 6

Objective: the aim of the reading activity was to help children to improve their capacities of not losing their place in the page. Considering that pupils autonomously chose when to intervene during the reading, the risk of this task was an overlapping whenever two or more pupils decided to read at the same time. This is the reason why the second objective of the task was to acquire the skill of taking turns with the companions.

As far as the drawing exercise is concerned, the teacher proposed another transcoding activity to promote the ability of expressing the same concept through different systems.

Duration: 35 minutes.

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[51] See page 21 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.

Materials: in order to carry out this class the photocopies of paper 26 were distributed[52].

Activity: in the first phase of the laboratory pupils finished sheet 21. Afterwards, the teacher read chapter 6 out loud and asked her children to complete the relative photocopy. The paper contained a short extract of the chapter in question describing Lavinia's clothes and look. Pupils had to read the text using a specific technique called by the teacher 'lettura alternata' (alternate reading). In other words, one child had to start the reading and every time he or she ceased because of the presence of a full stop, his/her classmates had to continue the reading one at a time introducing themselves spontaneously. Therefore, they were not spurred by the teacher in intervening. Then, children had to underline the elements of the text that corresponded to Lavinia's description. Eventually, they were invited to colour the picture of the little protagonist following the instructions furnished in the text.

4.10 Task 10: decorating the classroom

Objective: the primary aim of this task was to simply make the classroom a more playful environment. This activity, which is apparently detached from storytelling, is actually connected to Lavinia's story and its wintry setting.

Duration: 2 hours.

Materials: photocopy number 29 of the online document[53].

Activity: during this laboratory pupils finished colouring sheet 26. Later, the teacher distributed photocopy 29 containing the drawings of some snowflakes. Children were encouraged to colour them with cold colours in order to successively cut them out and pasted them to the windows to decorate the classroom.

In this chapter the different tasks proposed by the teacher to carry out the storytelling workshop have been illustrated. The activity included various disciplines and many kinds of exercises such as grammar tasks, laboratories aiming at developing creativity and artistic skills, games to support cooperation and learn the importance of respecting rules, reading and listening moments.

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[52] See page 26 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.
[53] See page 29 http://blog.edidablog.it/edidablog/scuolattiva/files/2013/09/Lavinia.pdf.

In the following paragraphs the interpretation of the data analysed in chapter 3 will be reported along with the potential relation between the tasks proposed, the modality through which they were promoted and pupils' behaviours.

Chapter V

Findings and discussion

As it has been mentioned in the third chapter of this paper, after having carried out a detailed coding activity, it emerged that during the storytelling workshop held with a group of primary school pupils, the subjects involved showed: a tendency to participate actively and spontaneously in the activities or inputs proposed by the teacher, to pay specific attention to the details heard during the reading moments and finally, they presented both positive or negative comments and statements about the emotions or sensations felt during the workshop. To be more exact, in most cases the feelings in question revealed to be positive and useful in decreasing the affective filter condition. In other cases, some activities included in the laboratory seem to have had the opposite effect on the pupils.

In the following paragraphs each of these categories will be analysed in detail by referring not only to the theoretical background provided in the previous chapters, but also by trying to understand in which activities these phenomena occurred most and what may have been the children's motivations in assuming a certain attitude. Finally, a series of considerations will be reported regarding which specific features of storytelling implementation have been respected on the basis of what was already cited by the experts in this field and which may or may not have influenced the children's response to this method.

5.1 Spontaneous participation

The very first interesting phenomenon that has been observed during the investigation was pupils' tendency to actively participate without being encouraged by their teacher. The different behaviours which attest this situation are represented by eye-contact with the teacher or watchful eyes while listening to the story, answering to the teacher's questions concerning the plot or the laboratory in general voluntarily, asking questions to obtain more information regarding the story, the characters or the vocabulary and spontaneous insertion of the pupils in the activities of alternate reading[54]. It appears important to highlight that the majority of these behaviours corresponds to those reported in the second chapter by Abdullah, Bakar and Mahbob (2011) and to the studies of Gomez, Arai and Lowe (1995) about how to identify active and spontaneous participation.

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[54] This specific kind of activity is quite accurately explained in chapter 4.

This positive attitude could be due to an interest on the part of the pupils in the plot or in the situations presented in the story since Lavinia's tale includes many of the needs children can satisfy only if they are told the right story. These elements are the same presented in chapter 1 by Bettelheim, Bruner and Warner. In fact, *L'Incredibile storia di Lavinia* is a fairy tale that, though modern, contains various elements of magic like a ring with unusual powers or a fairy wearing transparent clothes who appears in front of Lavinia on board of a luxurious car. Furthermore, the story is quite extraordinary since the magic object mentioned above does not have the power of a classic magic wand that makes objects fly or doors open without even touching them. On the contrary, it transforms everything into 'poop'. This novelty could be curious and engaging for an audience of young learners and also amusing.

Moreover, it has been noticed that pupils participated more spontaneously during the tasks which included summarising the plot of the story or the activities conducted in the lessons before the current one.

5.2 Attention for details

One of the most fascinating results of this observation is that, during the workshop, pupils showed a strong interest for the peculiarities of the tale and they demonstrated the capability to link what they learnt during the storytelling laboratory to external activities and vice versa. It appears relevant to report some examples in order to make the reader completely understand this quite complex phenomenon.

During the workshop, the teacher asked her pupils to voluntarily recap the plot of one of the chapters. In intervening, one of the pupils remembered not only the plot, but also some lines by heart. Another really interesting episode, which particularly caught the observer's attention, occurred when children were asked to draw and colour the shoes of Mr. Marsupiali's shoe shop on the shelves represented in the photocopy. Pupils had to use warm colours to complete the task. However, one of them considered worthwhile using also some cold colours so as to depict accurately Lavinia's boots which were light-blue. During the development of the same task, another child observed that the protagonist's boots should be drawn in a precise position, that is to say on the bottom right corner of the shelves. This detail was probably noticed by the student during the listening activity preceding the task in question.

As far as the creation of connections between the topics treated during the laboratory and external disciplines is concerned, it could be said that pupils showed this attitude also when the workshop was not performed, namely when the teacher asked children to carry out activities which resulted to be of a different nature with respect to the storytelling ones. For instance, during a normal Italian class, one of the pupils noticed that the author of the text they were reading was Bianca Pitzorno, the same of Lavinia's tale. In another case, a girl was reading an article cornering Mother Teresa[55] and her mission with poor children when suddenly one of her classmates intervened to make other students notice that the conditions of the children's nursed by Mother Teresa, were the same as Lavinia's.

All these considerations would appear superficial if the participants implicated in the project were not taken into account. In fact, links of this kind and such an attention to detail, might represent the development of acute logic skills and listening abilities.

The positive effect presented in these paragraphs can be due to several reasons. The first one can be again pupils' sense of engagement owing to the story itself and its distinctive traits, but also to the way the reading activities were performed. Indeed, as will be seen in paragraph 5.4, the teacher's reading style might have played a relevant role in this context since her involving and playful behaviour might have increased pupils' interest in the story and, as a consequence, made them appreciate it and remember details almost unconsciously.

Another element which should be taken into account is that pupils had these reactions especially during creative and visual activities such as colouring or drawing, or when they were asked to summarise the story and describe its characters.

It appears relevant to notice that this phenomenon seems to confirm Davies, Stanley and Dillingham's studies concerning the use of storytelling to increase students' attention and concentration. According to them, indeed, storytelling is such an engaging didactic method that children are more likely to develop complex skills like reasoning, making comparisons and transferring information. The same thoughts are shared by Temyara's (2016) in her research regarding storytelling used to teach English as a foreign language. Indeed, she also observed that this technique is useful to improve the memorisation processes.

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[55] Mother Teresa was born in Macedonia in 1910 and is known around the world as Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta. In 1937 she became a nun and in 1950 she funded a new congregation of sisters. She is popular for her dedication to the needy and to the poor of India and of the whole world.

5.3 Affective Filter

During the workshop, several other interesting phenomena were observed connected to the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen mentioned in the second chapter. Many pupils, indeed, seemed to have appreciated the story and the activities related to it in terms of emotions and sensations. Children showed positive feelings by laughing loudly when the name of one of the characters of the story was mentioned, namely Eleuterio Migliavacca, other pupils manifested their sense of comfort or enthusiasm by clearly saying it out loud through exclamations like "Oh si sta bene!" or "Si che bello!". In other cases some pupils insistently asked to continue the reading activity since they really liked the story.

It seems important to underline that this sense of positivity occurred especially during playful activities like colouring or listening to the story.

However, if on the one hand storytelling had a positive effect on the young learners involved in the project, on the other hand it led some children to manifest the opposite reaction. Indeed, some pupils appeared to be bored or tired during the laboratory. To give an example, one of the pupils started playing with a rubber and a pen during the listening activities while others revealed to be exhausted by expressing their will to go home ("voglio andare a casa") or by admitting that the activity they were carrying out make them weary of it.

This situation occurred especially when grammar or comprehension tasks which included writing were presented to children. The phenomenon can be due to a variety of factors which will be hypothesized in the lines which follow.

The first reason why children could have showed a negative behaviour is the method adopted to present the task. Indeed, in order to propose the grammar or comprehension activities, the teacher usually restricted herself to describing the task and giving the pupils a photocopy to complete. In this case, the issue to solve could be the presentation of the task together with the kind of activity to conduct. Indeed, it is commonly known that answering the questions on a photocopy or correcting the grammar mistakes of a text by copying it by hand are not the types of activities children prefer to do. Presenting them by creating an intriguing atmosphere in the classroom or finding other strategies to make these tasks more captivating would be a possible solution. For instance, instead of asking children to silently read a quite long nursery rhyme, identify the grammar mistakes present in the text and re-write it correctly in full, it

would probably be better to read it with the teacher, underline the mistakes with some colours and successively, deliver the same nursery rhyme with some holes in the text. In these holes students can write the correct forms of the wrong words present in the original photocopy.

The second cause of pupils' negative attitudes towards these tasks can be represented by a lack of diversity in the activities proposed. In other words, in some cases children could be tired or bored simply because they had spent the whole day doing the same task, that is writing on their notebooks. A useful solution would be that of simply alternating creative or more active tasks to those which are considered less interesting or more laborious by children. This hypothesis is founded upon Cummins' thoughts regarding the Affective Filter condition. Indeed, as mentioned in the chapter entitled *Literature review*, it seems to be fundamental for the teacher to propose assorted materials and tasks while carrying out storytelling activities. This strategy allows students to feel more concentrated and at ease.

In other cases, pupils' boredom or tiredness could have been due to psychophysical circumstances. An example is represented by the fact of proposing these activities to children after several hours of schooling. Obviously, it would be preferable to invite pupils to carry out less demanding cognitive tasks when their level of attention and interest reach low levels. This is the reason why grammar structures or comprehension activities appear not to be the most recommended ones.

Another important consideration regarding the concept of Affective Filter has to do with playful activities. During one of the classes dedicated to the workshop, the teacher proposed a game to the children including penalties. It was observed that, after an initial difficulty in understanding the rules of the game in question, the children began to play and laughed when one of their classmates lost or made a mistake and had to 'pay for his/her errors'. However, it was noticed that not all of the pupils appreciated penalties, even though they included quite amusing performances such as jumping like a frog or jumping more times on the same leg. Apparently, one of the pupils felt awkward or duped by his friends in doing these movements since he sulked and his cheeks became red. All these things considered, it could be hypothesized that even though games can be useful instruments to low the Affective Filter and improve learning in a playful way, it may happen that some pupils do not embrace this method and the result is an increase of tension or disinterest. Avoiding unpleasant situations seems to

be difficult for the teacher who should find balanced activities to actively engage pupils without making them feel demotivated or uncomfortable.

The last significant phenomenon concerning pupils' feelings and sensations during the storytelling laboratory is silence. It was observed that during various activities like listening to the story, drawing or writing, children kept silent and quiet. This condition is extremely difficult to analyse since it is almost impossible to understand its objective meaning. Indeed, some questions arose during the observation process on the part of the observer. For instance, did the children maintain this condition because they were carefully listening to the tale or did they feel bored? Were they concentrated on the task they were carrying out or were they tired? In order to answer these questions and clarify any doubts it would have been necessary to interview children. Nevertheless, given that the agreement established with the school staff and authorities was of a different type, it was not possible to do so.

Before moving on to further observations, it seems worth highlighting that the findings obtained through this investigation confirmed what has been treated in chapter 2 as far as the benefits of storytelling activities in the learning environment are concerned. Indeed, the workshop led the participants implicated in the research to participate actively and spontaneously to the tasks proposed and to remember quite specific details regarding the story. This last consideration can be associated with the benefits of 'attention and concentration' exposed in the second chapter of this paper.

Considering the thought according to which storytelling is a tool to lower the Affective Filter condition, the statement cannot be completely proved since in this specific investigation it has led to both positive and negative effects. Nonetheless, it should also be admitted that the number of positive comments or attitudes collected (11) is slightly higher than the disserting ones (8) and the indecipherable moments of silence (8).

5.4 Further considerations

After some considerations regarding the main findings of the data collected during the direct observation process, it appears interesting to report other remarks by the observer concerning the laboratory and its implementation. These considerations were not believed to be adequate to create categories during the coding process as they did not directly regard pupils' reactions but general opinions concerning how the storytelling activities were developed and organised.

Therefore, considering them as actual codes, they would have distanced the researcher from the focus of the investigation and its objectives.

The first phenomenon which was noticed is that the teacher adhered to most of the strategies and foresights mentioned in chapter 2 regarding how to structure a beneficial storytelling workshop. First of all, she selected an appropriate story taking into account the needs of her pupils, their age and mother tongue as suggested by Wright. Secondly, she decided to read the story out loud instead of telling it adopting an involving and amusing attitude. Indeed, as emerged from the field notes collected, the teacher tended to read in a very impressive manner by changing the volume, intonation and timbre of her voice, using various gestures and movements probably to capture the pupils' attention and make them feel engaged and amused. A concrete example from the observer's logbook is reported below.

> "*La maestra legge a voce alta, con enfasi e cambiando tono di voce per distinguere i diversi personaggi all'interno della storia facendo percepire anche il loro stato d'animo con intonazione e mimica facciale*."

A part from this, the teacher also tried to gain the children's interest by creating moments of silence which were defined by Fox Eades as the perfect listening atmosphere. This occurred just at the beginning of the reading and listening activities when she asked pupils to assume the already mentioned 'listening attitude'[56]. Presumably, she aimed at creating a positive, relaxed and stimulating atmosphere before approaching the reading moment.

It was also noticed that some of the activities required work on the Italian language, especially vocabulary, and that sometimes pupils asked for the meaning of the terms or expressions they did not know or understand. In one of these cases, there was an attempt by the teacher to actualise a sort of Total Physical Response method. Some pupils did not understand the meaning of 'a pair of' ('un paio di'). In order to make the situation clearer, the teacher decided to ask some children to take their shoes off and make concrete examples distinguishing between wearing a single shoe or wearing a pair of them.

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[56] See Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.

5.5 Suggestions for new investigations about storytelling

In this paper storytelling has been studied by using a qualitative approach with some primary school pupils. Several investigations have been carried out in the educational area considering as subjects pupils attended classes at kindergarten, elementary school and middle school as it has been demonstrated in the chapter entitled 'Literature review'. However, little research has been carried out at the higher levels of education such as at high school or in the university environment. It would be interesting to see what young adult students and teachers' opinions are concerning storytelling by adopting a triangulation method and a mixed paradigm approach. For example, it would be interesting to interview the teachers of different groups of high school students after the realisation of a storytelling workshop to learn a foreign language. To complete the triangulation process the experimenter could also observe the students directly during the laboratory and take notes of their behaviours. He or she could also distribute some questionnaires at the end of the workshop to verify the reliability of the notes collected.

Another interesting experiment concerning storytelling would be carried out with both children or young adults in order to understand how really effective storytelling is in terms of learning, especially language acquisition. For instance, students could be taught some vocabulary or structures through a storytelling workshop and they could be regularly checked by means of tests or specific tasks to monitor their progresses. At the end of the laboratory and of the examinations it will be possible to make a comparison between the data collected and to verify storytelling efficacy in terms of learning. Obviously, the fact of including in the research students' personal data such as their progress at school or their marks will required a refined work with ethic and privacy policies.

After having furnished a quite detailed interpretation of the data collected and having discussed it, some conclusions will be reported in order to summarise the path which led to these results and inspired this research.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to investigate the concept of storytelling as a didactic methodology and to understand how this technique is reputed by the students. In order to do so, some qualitative research was conducted in a primary school class involved in a storytelling workshop carried out in Italian.

The focus of the research was based on a specific question: what impact do storytelling activities have on these children? That is to say, what reactions, comments, behaviours did student show during the workshop activities? What effects did storytelling have on them?

The results of the direct observation of the pupils showed children's tendency to participate actively and spontaneously in the activities proposed during the workshop, especially when the tasks concerned summarising the plot of the story or explaining what activities had been done in the previous lessons to the rest of the class.

Moreover, pupils showed attitudes of concentration and attention during the listening moments. Some evidence of this phenomenon lies in the fact that pupils intervened in several occasions by reporting specific details of the story they were told. It was also observed that, not only did children register such accurate information, but they were also able to connect the notions and concepts learnt during the laboratory to external subjects and activities or vice versa.

The last data that emerged from the observation procedure had to do with the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Indeed, it was proved that storytelling activities, in the way they were conducted, led to the activation or deactivation of this psychophysical phenomenon regarding the learning process.

The results of this investigation can be due to several factors. However, by making some connections between the findings obtained from the research and the theoretical information acquired from the experts in the field of storytelling and Didactics, it was possible to narrow the options. It was hypothesized that all the positive findings obtained were the result of the choice of an involving and unusual story, of the implementation of active, engaging and playful activities and, in some cases, of the circumstances under which the tasks were promoted by

the teacher or embraced by the pupils. The only situation which entailed some perplexities is embodied by the Affective Filter condition. Indeed, the elements entailed in this category presented both positive and negative results in welcoming some of the activities proposed during the workshop. Considering the reactions the children had towards certain tasks or situations, it was assumed that artistic and listening activities were those which most found pupils' favour. On the contrary, grammatical and writing tasks appeared less welcome. Games, instead, turned out to be a 'double-edge weapon' since some children showed behaviours of appreciation, while others probably felt embarrassed or annoyed while playing.

All these things considered, it could be concluded that storytelling is actually a useful and effective teaching and learning method. Indeed, it entails several benefits and can be used with several disciplines, even though a lot of research has demonstrated the positive effects of this strategy limited to the language learning field. The study presented in this paper seems to confirm pre-existing investigations and literature notions, by depicting storytelling as an extremely beneficial technique, particularly if applied in primary school contexts. Obviously, the success of the application of this method depends on several factors which cannot be underestimated. For instance, the target audience, the didactic objectives, the story to choose, the potential language involved, the way the laboratory or classes are performed and many other elements.

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Appendix A

Data Tabulation

Mean of the hours spent during the apprenticeship for the storytelling laboratory

Week 1	5:00 h
Week 2	1:40 h
Week 3	0 h
Week 4	1:10 h
Week 5	1:00 h
Week 6	2:30 h
Week 7	0 h
Week 8	1:10 h
Week 9	0 h
Week 10	2:00 h

Mean → 5 + 2,30 + 2+1,40 + 1,10 +1,10+ 1,10 +1 +0 +0 + 0 = 15, 50 hours = 1, 55 hours

10 (weeks)   10

Data reduction

Table 1: Open and axial coding

What impact did storytelling activities have on these children?				
1) Spontaneous participation	**2) Attention for details**	**3) Silent moments**	**4) Positive feelings**	**5) Negative feelings**
Ciò si può intuire dagli sguardi vigili e dalla partecipazione, dal continuo fare domande su ciò che andremo a fare … Molti di loro rispondono volontariamente senza essere interpellati dalla docente o da me. … I bambini fanno domande e sono interessati anche a termini complessi … … in coro rispondono "Lavinia" … Chiediamo ai bambini cosa si ricordano della storia di Lavinia e molti	È bellissimo vedere quanti particolari vengono ricordati. C'è chi dice che Lavinia era povera, aveva freddo, non aveva i genitori. Qualcuno ricorda addirittura le battute di alcuni personaggi. Si sente un coro dire "svolgimento"… ho notato che stanno capendo lo svolgimento cronologico dei fatti anche legato ad una storia che non è quella letta sul libro. Un ambino si ricorda addirittura le battute dei personaggi a memoria!	I bambini prendono la loro scheda e finiscono l'esercizio di correzione e copiatura della filastrocca con le parole corrette. Niente da segnalare. I bambini sono silenziosi. Tutti si mettono in posizione di lettura e ascoltano silenziosi. … I bambini sono silenziosi e sembrano ascoltare ed essere interessati in quanto hanno gli occhi attenti sulla lettrice …	Decidiamo quindi di saltare le schede di comprensione e di saltare a qualcosa di più artistico e che richiede meno sforzo: colorare un'immagine della protagonista. Molti esultano e gridano "Siii". … un bambino in particolare sembra apprezzare molto. Infatti dice "Oh si sta bene!". I bambini che amano disegnare esultano … Un bambino dice: "mi sto divertendo!" Tutti scoppiano a ridere.	I bambini sbadigliano e chiedono aiuto ala maestra per la seconda domanda che vuole invece stimolare la fantasia. Un bambino sembra essere annoiato perché dice "voglio andare a casa". … altri invece sbuffano. … alcuni bambini mi dicono di essere davvero stanchi di scrivere … Solo un bambino sembra essere imbarazzato nel subire la penitenza per aver sbagliato. Tiene il broncio e ha il viso arrossato.

rispondono alzando la mano. … I bambini alzano la mano per rispondere se i compagni di classe non sanno rispondere. e uno dei bambini dice "COME LAVINIA". … allora i compagni (più della metà) alzano la mano per rispondere e ricordano il nome ai compagni. I bambini si inseriscono senza problemi. Quando le voci si sovrappongono la maestra interviene per gestire i turni di parola. .	… uno fa notare che sugli scaffali va disegnato un paio di stivaletti azzurri perché sono quelli "acquistati" da Lavinia. Un altro fa notare che, dato che la stagione è l'inverno, non posiamo di certo disegnare sandali ed infradito ma scarpe invernali. Un altro ancora fa notare che gli scarponcini di Lavinia, nel negozio, si trovavano sullo scaffale IN ALTO e quindi andavano disegnati in quella posizione. Durante questa lettura, la maestra spiega che Madre Teresa curava i bambini poveri e uno dei bambini dice "COME LAVINIA". Qualcuno prende il colore azzurro per colorare l'immagine dei colori caldi. Io faccio notare al bambino che l'azzurro è un colore freddo. Il bambino mi fa notare che ho ragione ma che, anche se deve usare i colori caldi, gli stivaletti di Lavinia sono azzurri. Un bambino nota che l'autrice dell'estratto proposto è Bianca Pitzorno, la stessa di Lavinia. Qualcuno dei ragazzi mi fa notare che nella scheda 15 manca un	La classe nel complesso è silenziosa e faccio un giro per i banchi per vedere se tutti stanno lavorando. Tutti hanno gli occhi rivolti verso la maestra e sono silenziosi. Forse stanno ascoltando attentamente? Sono silenziosi. Tutti scrivono silenziosamente … Per il resto c'è silenzio.	… tutti scoppiano a ridere fragorosamente … … bambini chiedere alla maestra di proseguire con la lettura della storia. 2 bambini dicono "si che bello", "siii coloriamo". Prima di iniziare una bambina mi chiede due volte se possiamo leggere ancora la storia di Lavinia perché le piace molto. Siccome la bambina della mattina mi chiede ancora di Lavinia, la maestra interviene dicendo che leggeremo resto la sua storia. Qualcuno colora sorridendo e mi dice di essere contento … Alcuni bambini dicono che questa attività li rilassa e chiedono addirittura la musica.	Un solo bambino sembra non essere particolarmente interessato e infatti gioca con la gomma e la matita … Ma un bambino dice che a lui non piace la trama. … altri dicono di non aver voglia di colorare.

elemento nella descrizione di Lavinia: il colore dei pantaloni e della sua pelliccia. Che attenti questi bambini.			

Table 2: selective coding

What impact did storytelling activities have on these children?		
1) Spontaneous participation	**2) Attention for details**	**3) Affective filter**
Ciò si può intuire dagli sguardi vigili e dalla partecipazione, dal continuo fare domande su ciò che andremo a fare …	È bellissimo vedere quanti particolari vengono ricordati. C'è chi dice che Lavinia era povera, aveva freddo, non aveva i genitori.	Decidiamo quindi di saltare le schede di comprensione e di saltare a qualcosa di più artistico e che richiede meno sforzo: colorare un'immagine della protagonista. Molti esultano e gridano "Siii".
Molti di loro rispondono volontariamente senza essere interpellati dalla docente o da me.	Qualcuno ricorda addirittura le battute di alcuni personaggi.	… un bambino in particolare sembra apprezzare molto. Infatti dice "Oh si sta bene!".
… I bambini fanno domande e sono interessati anche a termini complessi …	Si sente un coro dire "svolgimento"… ho notato che stanno capendo lo svolgimento cronologico dei fatti anche legato ad una storia che non è quella letta sul libro.	Un bambino dice: "mi sto divertendo!"
… in coro rispondono "Lavinia" …		Tutti scoppiano a ridere.
Chiediamo ai bambini cosa si ricordano della storia di Lavinia e molti rispondono alzando la mano.	Un bambino si ricorda addirittura le battute dei personaggi a memoria!	… tutti scoppiano a ridere fragorosamente …
… I bambini alzano la mano per rispondere se i compagni di classe non sanno rispondere.	… uno fa notare che sugli scaffali va disegnato un paio di stivaletti azzurri perché sono quelli "acquistati" da Lavinia. Un altro fa notare che, dato che la stagione è l'inverno, non possiamo di certo disegnare sandali ed infradito ma scarpe invernali.	… bambini chiedere alla maestra di proseguire con la lettura della storia.
e uno dei bambini dice "COME LAVINIA".		2 bambini dicono "si che bello", "siii coloriamo".
… allora i compagni (più della metà) alzano la mano per rispondere e ricordano il nome ai compagni.	Un altro ancora fa notare che gli scarponcini di Lavinia, nel negozio, si trovavano sullo scaffale IN ALTO e quindi andavano disegnati in quella posizione.	Prima di iniziare una bambina mi chiede due volte se possiamo leggere ancora la storia di Lavinia perché le piace molto.
I bambini si inseriscono senza problemi. Quando le voci si sovrappongono la maestra interviene per gestire i turni di parola.	Durante questa lettura, la maestra spiega che Madre Teresa curava i bambini poveri e uno dei bambini dice "COME LAVINIA".	Siccome la bambina della mattina mi chiede ancora di Lavinia, la maestra interviene dicendo che leggeremo resto la sua storia.
		Qualcuno colora sorridendo e

	Qualcuno prende il colore azzurro per colorare l'immagine dei colori caldi. Io faccio notare al bambino che l'azzurro è un colore freddo. Il bambino mi fa notare che ho ragione ma che, anche se deve usare i colori caldi, gli stivaletti di Lavinia sono azzurri.	mi dice di essere contento …
		Alcuni bambini dicono che questa attività li rilassa e chiedono addirittura la musica.
		I bambini sbadigliano e chiedono aiuto ala maestra per la seconda domanda che vuole invece stimolare la fantasia.
	Un bambino nota che l'autrice dell'estratto proposto è Bianca Pitzorno, la stessa di Lavinia.	Un bambino sembra essere annoiato perché dice "voglio andare a casa".
	Qualcuno dei ragazzi mi fa notare che nella scheda 15 manca un elemento nella descrizione di Lavinia: il colore dei pantaloni e della sua pelliccia. Che attenti questi bambini.	I bambini che amano disegnare esultano, altri invece sbuffano.
		… alcuni bambini mi dicono di essere davvero stanchi di scrivere …
		Solo un bambino sembra essere imbarazzato nel subire la penitenza per aver sbagliato. Tiene il broncio e ha il viso arrossato.
		Un solo bambino sembra non essere particolarmente interessato e infatti gioca con la gomma e la matita …
		Ma un bambino dice che a lui non piace la trama.
		… altri dicono di non aver voglia di colorare.
		I bambini prendono la loro scheda e finiscono l'esercizio di correzione e copiatura della filastrocca con le parole corrette. Niente da segnalare. I bambini sono silenziosi.
		Tutti si mettono in posizione di lettura e ascoltano silenziosi.
		… I bambini sono silenziosi e sembrano ascoltare ed essere interessati in quanto hanno gli occhi attenti sulla lettrice …
		La classe nel complesso è silenziosa e faccio un giro per i banchi per vedere se tutti

		stanno lavorando.
		Tutti hanno gli occhi rivolti verso la maestra e sono silenziosi. Forse stanno ascoltando attentamente?
		Sono silenziosi.
		Tutti scrivono silenziosamente …
		Per il resto c'è silenzio.

Appendix B

Documents for the realisation of the laboratory and students' observation

DICHIARAZIONE
(da compilare a cura dell'esperto/genitore)

Il/La sottoscritto/a BERETTA ANNA , nato a ROVIGO il 31/08/95 e residente in PORTO VIRO , via C. RISORGIMENTO n._____ cellulare 346 6616 084, mail anna.beretta2018@gmail.com, in qualità di espertoesternodellaseguenteattività STAGE UNIVERSITARIO, come da progetto presentato agli atti, con la sottoscrizione della presente:

- ☒ Si impegna a non divulgare notizie e/o dati sensibili di cui venisse a conoscenza durante la permanenza in Istituto, in base al Decreto legislativo 30 giugno 2003, n. 196 e s.m.i.;

- ☒ dichiara di aver preso visione delle norme relative alla sicurezza ai sensi del D.Lgs, 81/2008.

L'Istituto fa presente che i dati personali forniti dal / dalla Sig. / Sig.ra BERETTA ANNA saranno oggetto di trattamento ai sensi e per gli effetti del Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali, D. Lg.vo 196/2003.

Data 23 | 10 | 2018

Firma

Anna Beretta

Richiesta di permesso raccolta ed elaborazione dati per tesi di laurea

La studentessa Beretta Anna, nata a Rovigo il 31/08/1995 e residente a Porto Viro (RO) chiede di poter utilizzare i dati e le informazioni raccolti durante lo stage promosso dall'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, ai fini della stesura della propria tesi di laurea magistrale in Scienze del Linguaggio presso il suddetto ateneo.

La raccolta dati consisterà in un diario di bordo introspettivo. La stagista prenderà quindi alcuni appunti generali riguardanti le sue impressioni ed eventuali difficoltà sulle attività svolte e si limiterà a riportare il livello di gradimento di tali proposte da parte degli studenti della classe 2°A del plesso A. Moro.

Le informazioni raccolte non andranno in alcun modo a violare i diritti etici e di privacy della scuola, degli studenti o della docente coinvolti nell'attività di tirocinio. Tutti i dati verranno infatti espressi in forma assolutamente anonima.

Per concedere la realizzazione di tale lavoro si richiede cortesemente al/alla dirigente dell'Istituto Comprensivo di Porto Viro di acconsentire a quanto precedentemente riportato.

Firma della stagista

Anna Beretta

Firma del dirigente scolastico

Paola Passatempi

Nel caso in cui la scuola gradisse essere nominata nei ringraziamenti finali del progetto di tesi si richiede un'ulteriore consenso esprimendo la propria preferenza contrassegnando con una X la casella desiderata.

- [X] il dirigente scolastico dà il suo consenso affinché il nome dell'Istituto Comprensivo di Porto Viro appaia nei ringraziamenti finali della tesi di laurea magistrale della stagista Beretta Anna.

- [ ] Il dirigente scolastico **NON** desidera dare il suo consenso affinché il nome dell'Istituto Comprensivo di Porto Viro appaia nei ringraziamenti finali della tesi di laurea magistrale della stagista Beretta Anna.

Firma del dirigente scolastico
IL DIRIGENTE SCOLASTICO
prof.ssa Paola Passatempi

Paola Passatempi

Acknowledgements

After several months of hard work and dedication, I have finally achieved one of my biggest dreams and I am not referring just to my degree. Graduating is obviously an important result, but being graduated and, at last, having the chance to become a teacher, or it would be better to say an educator, is the actual success. During my last year at university I attended a class which let me feel perplex and a little disappointed at the same time. The lecturer was carrying out a fascinating lesson about the meaning of teaching languages and the strategies to use to engage students. At the end of the time slot, the lecturer maintained that teaching can be interpreted in several manners but certainly, not as a vocation. Unfortunately, I could not listen to the explanation of his thought since I was a commuter and I had to take a train but that exclamation made me think a lot. Personally speaking, I completely disagree with his statement. Vocation comes from the Latin verb *vocare* which means 'to call' or 'to invite' and each of as is 'called/invited' to carry out a mission or maybe more than one in this world, and for now, I think this is my mine.

All these things considered, there are so many people I would like to thank for the achievement of this goal.

First of all, I would like to thank my university supervisor and her assistant, respectively professors Carmel Mary Coonan and Marcella Menegale, for their tips, their patience but especially for their devotion to their job and students. They were really inspiring to me.

Secondly, I want to thank all the pupils and staff of Istituto Comprensivo di Porto Viro for allowing me to conduct my research and for having been so welcoming. A special esteem message goes to Elisa who taught me the difference between teaching and educating through her gestures and the care she had of her pupils.

A lot of gratitude also goes to my university mates, "The colleagues", and my ex-flat mates with whom I shared so much laughter, imitations and delayed trains.

I would also like to thank all the groups I am part of such as the priests, children's entertainers and catechists of the oratory of my town for revealing me the real values of life, namely hope, faith and charity, and the Mimes group for giving me the opportunity to discover the enchanting art of dancing.

Finally, I have to thank all the members of my family and my best friends who have always been by my side and always encouraged me to pursue my objectives, for having made so many

efforts to make me feel as happy as possible, even when I was not so collaborative. Thus, I would like to thank my parents, my brothers, my sister in low, my magnificent nephew Riccardo, all my uncles, aunts and cousins, and those family friends who are to me as my second grandparents.